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THE ALBERTA PRESS AND THE CONSCRIPTION ISSUE

IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1918

by



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Dedicated to my wife Ingrid, whose patience
and assistance made this study possible.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the editorial reaction of the Alberta press to the adoption of compulsory military service by Canada during World War I. Conscription with its attendant issues--the failure of volunteer recruiting, coalition, Union government, disfranchisement, the election of 1917, and the cancellation of exemptions for farmers' sons--has often been viewed as a reason for the disillusionment of western Canadians with the traditional political parties following the war. The political shift evident in the federal election of 1917 and later in the federal and Alberta provincial elections of 1921 support this view. It was the conscription issue which split the Liberal party and resulted in the formation of a pro-conscriptionist Unionist party which defeated the Liberals in the federal election of 1917.

On the basis of those elected in the 1917 federal election one might conclude that the west was solidly behind the Union government. With the exception of one constituency, Alberta returned Unionist members in 1917. Nevertheless, when one looks at the actual votes cast the picture changes, especially when the War-time Elections Act and the Military Voters Act are considered. Elections in the early part of the twentieth century, as today, were fought in part through the mass media. In 1917 the principal medium was the newspaper. This study examines the changing attitudes of daily and weekly newspapers in Alberta to recruiting, the war effort, conscription, coalition and other related issues. All of Alberta's daily newspapers have been examined in detail and ninety-two of the weeklies then publishing in the province

have been located and examined. The unique position of Frank Oliver's Edmonton Bulletin as one of the few remaining pro-Laurier dailies in English Canada makes this paper a natural focal point for this study. This study employs a large amount of source material to illustrate the various positions taken by segments of the Alberta press. It provides a synthesis of views as expounded by the Alberta press and outlines their position on issues related to the conscription crisis of 1917.

PREFACE

This study rests upon an understanding of the nature of the Alberta press and the political background of the more influential papers in the province. Historians have noted the contributions of great western newspapermen during this period when newspapers played a vital role in informing and guiding the public. Certainly most students of western Canadian history are familiar with the contributions of John W. Dafoe and the Manitoba Free Press. Although some will be familiar with Frank Oliver and the Edmonton Bulletin, many of the editors and publishers of other major newspapers in Alberta are not well-known. Therefore, an understanding of this study will be enhanced by a brief account of the nature of the Alberta press during the First World War and a look at some of the more prominent people who edited and published newspapers in the province.

In 1917 there were seven Alberta dailies publishing in the province. These were the Edmonton Bulletin, the Edmonton Journal, the Calgary Albertan, the Calgary Herald, the Lethbridge Herald, the Medicine Hat Times and the floundering Calgary News-Telegram which in 1917 became the Calgary Canadian and shortly thereafter disappeared from the ranks of Alberta's daily newspapers. Of these the Edmonton Bulletin which commenced publication as a weekly on December 6, 1880, has the distinction of being the first published newspaper in Alberta. The career of its editor and publisher was to be a long one, both as a newspaperman and a politician in Canada.

Frank Oliver, born Francis Robert Oliver Bowsfield in

Perth County, Ontario adopted his mother's maiden name when he went to work on the Toronto Globe at the age of twelve. He came west in 1873, working for the Manitoba Free Press before moving to Edmonton and starting the Bulletin in 1880. The Bulletin became a daily in 1882 and was a leading advocate of Liberal policy in western Canada during the war period. Oliver's political career began in 1883 when he was elected to the North West Territories Council. He was subsequently elected to the Territorial Legislative Assembly and the Parliament of Canada. Emerging as a staunch Laurier Liberal, he served as Minister of the Interior in Laurier's cabinet from 1905 to 1911. In the 1911 political shift he moved into opposition with Laurier and used his parliamentary and editorial skills to denounce Robert Borden and his Conservative government. Although his paper remained a pro-conscription daily throughout the war, Oliver did not join the ranks of the Unionist movement but ran as a Laurier Liberal in the federal election of 1917. He was defeated by W. A. Griesbach in a close race decided by the military vote. After the election Oliver continued to oppose the Borden government and contested Edmonton West, his old seat, in the 1921 election but lost out to the Progressive candidate. His newspaper continued to fight the Liberal cause even after his death in 1933 until it was eventually purchased by the Southam interests through the Edmonton Journal.

Politics and papers mixed well in Alberta and another example of this direct affiliation is found in W. A. Buchanan, founder and editor of the Lethbridge Herald. Buchanan, after a varied career as a newspaperman in Ontario, moved to Lethbridge and established the weekly Lethbridge Herald in 1905. The Herald became a daily in

1907 and reflected the politics of its editor and publisher by supporting the Liberal party. After a brief career as Alberta's first provincial librarian in 1907, Buchanan concentrated on publishing his newspaper until 1909 when he was elected to the Alberta Legislature and appointed Minister without Portfolio in the cabinet of A. C. Rutherford. Within a few months he withdrew from the cabinet due to differences over the government's railway policy but retained his seat in the provincial legislature until 1911 when he resigned in order to enter federal politics. In the federal election of that year he was elected to the House of Commons as a Liberal member for Medicine Hat. He and his paper continued to support Laurier until the conscription crisis of 1917, when Buchanan joined the coalition movement as a pro-conscriptionist Liberal and carried the Herald with him into the Unionist camp. In the conscription election of 1917 he successfully ran as a Unionist candidate. He announced his intention of running as a Liberal candidate in the 1921 election but later withdrew from the contest.

Buchanan's Herald was not the only Liberal daily in the province to slip into the Unionist fold. The Calgary Albertan and the Medicine Hat Times, which were traditionally strong Liberal papers, became active supporters of the Unionist movement. The transfer of the Albertan was not surprising as its editor, W. M. Davidson, a successful Liberal candidate in the provincial election of June, 1917, had led an intensive campaign for coalition government since the beginning of 1917. The other Alberta Liberal and pro-Laurier daily, the Calgary News-Telegram, later the Calgary Canadian, remained a Liberal journal but was of little consequence as it was overshadowed by its Calgary contemporaries the Calgary Albertan and the Calgary

Herald.

Indeed, Calgary was the traditional base for the Conservative orientated press in the province and the Calgary Herald, a Southam paper by 1917 under the editorship of J. H. Woods, retained its position as the leading Conservative daily in the province. The Herald, established in 1883, passed through a series of hands until J. H. Woods took over as managing director and editor in 1907. The paper had obtained its Conservative attitude from its former owner, John J. Young, who in turn had bought out his partner, C. A. Magrath, a Conservative of some prominence in the province and the individual whom W. A. Buchanan later defeated in the federal election of 1911. Woods arranged for the sale of the paper to the Herald Publishing Company of which the Southam family owned 51 percent, Henry Watson 26 percent and Woods 33 percent. Watson was a banker friend of the Southams who helped to finance Woods' share of the company. Woods, in attempting to maintain a moderate and slightly independent editorial policy, upset the Southams particularly when prominent Calgary Conservatives threatened to establish another paper which would give the Conservative party greater support. The Herald and Woods eventually moved toward a more Conservative attitude but not before he had threatened to resign and had pointed out to the Southams that he had succeeded in purchasing control of the Edmonton Journal and the Lethbridge News, the only other Conservative journals of any standing in the province.

In 1912, the Southams bought into the Journal and the News. The Lethbridge News had been converted to a daily by Woods but it failed to compete successfully with Buchanan's Herald and in July

of 1913 it reverted to a weekly and ceased publication in December of that year. Lethbridge Conservatives approached the Southams to continue publication but were informed that if they wanted a charity, they could pay for it themselves. This left the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal, both controlled by the Southams and J. H. Woods, as the leading Alberta Conservative dailies during the war years. In addition to the Southams and J. H. Woods, other prominent Albertans held shares in the Edmonton Journal. Two of the more notable ones were W. A. Griesbach and C. A. Magrath. Woods and his papers supported Borden and the Conservatives and converted to the Unionist attitude only after it became acceptable to the Conservative party generally. J. H. Woods was selected to head a group of Canadian newspapermen who toured Great Britain and the front in 1918 at the invitation of the British government.

All Alberta dailies, either through editorial partisanship or ownership were involved in party politics during the war period and suffered through the difficulties of the period of political realignment necessitated by the formation of the Unionist party based upon its pro-conscriptionist views. The weekly press, although many were not actively involved in politics, did have some outstanding examples of partisanship as well. The Camrose Canadian, for example, was owned by George P. Smith who was first elected to the Alberta Legislature as a Liberal member in 1909. Following the transfer of the Premier, A. L. Sifton, to federal politics in 1917, Smith was appointed Provincial Secretary, the only new cabinet member in the Stewart government. Smith retained ownership of the Canadian throughout the war period, selling it in 1922. Another Albertan of note was the president of the

company which published the Olds Gazette, Duncan Marshall, a former provincial cabinet minister who was returned as a Liberal candidate in the provincial election of 1917.

The attitudes of some of the editors of frontier weeklies toward the conscription crisis and the coalition movement were shaped by personal experiences related to the war. A number of these editors had volunteered for military service soon after the war began. Some, like John Mackenzie of the Strathmore and Bow Valley Standard, had employees carry on their business until they returned. Mackenzie enlisted in the 89th Battalion in 1915, went to France in 1916 and was severely wounded at Vimy Ridge. W. J. Huntingford sold the Lloyd-minster Review in August of 1914 and upon his discharge from the army in 1916 located at Wainwright and managed the Star until 1920 when he purchased it. Others, like J. A. Caswell of the Red Deer News, had all of their sons serving overseas during the war. The attitudes of these people to the conscription issue and the coalition movement were shaped by their personal experiences as well as the usual political considerations.

It is impossible in the space of this preface to examine the background of all of the weeklies and their publishers and editors. However, the reader may ascertain the political viewpoints of the various Alberta newspapers discussed in this study by consulting the table in Appendix III.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Conscription, one of the controversial issues of Canadian history, is usually discussed within the context of English-French relations in Canada.¹ While extensive examination of the French-Canadian position has been undertaken, studies on the subject as they apply to English Canada have been somewhat limited. Investigations in English Canada have tended to concentrate on the anti-French views of Ontario, largely ignoring this issue in other parts of Canada.

The importance of conscription as a contributing factor to the turmoil of the post-war period, both in federal and provincial politics, is well recognized by Canadian historians. Particularly in the Canadian west, where conscription with its attendant issues--union government, the disenfranchisement of aliens, and the cancellation of exemptions for farmers' sons--is viewed as a major reason for the total disillusionment with the traditional parties among western Canadians following the war.

Senator Norman Lambert, in a review of Professor W. L. Morton's The Progressive Party in Canada, insisted that the years from 1917 to 1923 were vital to the history of western Canada "because they marked an era of active political revolt against national

¹ Conscription remained a contentious issue for Canadians following World War II. See J. L. Granatstein, "'Strictly on its Merits': The Conscription Issue in Canada after 1945," Queens Quarterly, LXXIX, No. 2, (Summer, 1972), 192-206.

policies which had prevailed for nearly two generations."² Professor Morton pointed out that the major political concern of the western agrarians, tariffs, was overwhelmed by "the passion and hysteria of a wartime election," an election which had conscription as its central issue.³

It is, of course, possible to ascertain how westerners voted in the election of 1917. Many historians see the farmers' lack of success at the polls as a reflection of the excitement over conscription and the nationalism which was exhibited by western Canadians who supported the Union government. They view the defection of the Liberals to the Unionist fold as destroying the Liberal party machinery in the West and the subsequent failure of the Union government to fulfill the expectations of the agrarian population as the principal reasons for the loss of faith in the traditional parties among western Canadians. The success of the U. F. A. in Alberta and the Progressives federally in 1921 would certainly suggest that this analysis is correct.

If this is true, more attention to the divisive role of conscription in western Canadian politics is necessary. It was the conscription issue which split the Liberal party and resulted in the formation of the pro-conscription Unionist party. It was the failure of the Unionist government to live up to its promise of exemption from compulsory service for farmers' sons which helped to destroy further the

²C. Frank Steele, Prairie Editor (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1961), p. 106.

³W. L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 49.

faith of the agrarian population in the Union government.⁴

On the basis of those elected in the 1917 federal election one must conclude that the west was solidly behind the Unionist government. However, if one looks at the actual votes cast, the picture changes somewhat, especially when the War-time Elections Act and the Military Voters Act are considered.⁵

Elections in the early part of the twentieth century, as today, were fought in part through the mass media and in 1917 the principal medium was the newspaper. The purpose of this thesis will be to examine the press of one province, Alberta, and to describe the reaction of those papers to the conscription issue.

With the exception of one constituency, Alberta returned Unionist members in 1917. It was this province that considerably exceeded the quota of men and money which had been set for her.⁶ Yet in this province, as in others, the strong traditional parties were destroyed by conscription and its attendant issues. We will be tracing the change in attitudes in the Alberta press toward compulsory military service as the war progressed.

Since the controversy over the Military Service Act occurred primarily in 1917, the selection of newspapers has been largely limited to those publishing in Alberta in that year. All of Alberta's daily newspapers from 1917 will be examined in detail and

⁴Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. I: The Door of Opportunity (Toronto: Clark, Irwin & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 193.

⁵See Appendix I.

⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), June 23, 1917, p. 7.

ninety-two of the weeklies then publishing in the province have been located and will be utilized in this presentation.

The principal dailies, the Calgary Albertan, the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Bulletin, the Edmonton Journal, and the Lethbridge Herald have been examined for the whole war period and will provide the bulk of the source material for this thesis. The unique position of Frank Oliver's Edmonton Bulletin as the major pro-Laurier daily in the province following the split in the Liberal party over conscription, makes this paper a natural focal point for our consideration of the Alberta press and the conscription crisis during World War I.

The shift of other important Liberal dailies, notably the Calgary Albertan and the Lethbridge Herald, from Liberalism to Unionist will also be examined. The politically orientated weeklies tended to follow the lead of the large Liberal and Conservative dailies in the province although there were a few exceptions. Many weeklies did not offer opinions on conscription; those that did so along with the provincial daily press, engaged in a long and complicated discussion of the provision of adequate reinforcements for the Canadian armed forces.

While it may seem relatively easy to isolate conscription in one's mind, the issue was not that simple. The question was not only whether there would be compulsory military service or not, but whether was it necessary or desirable. Who should be called up first? How should it be introduced? Should certain classes be exempted? Would areas with poor recruiting records be conscripted at the same rate as other areas? These and similar questions were debated in the Alberta press when the necessity of introducing a draft law was announced by Premier R. L. Borden. The debate over conscription

resulted in the creation of a new party dedicated to the implementation of the Military Service Act. The creation of the Unionist party and its election to power in 1917 was closely followed in the Alberta press. Some of the methods used by the government to win that election were questioned in the press, particularly the measures related to the soldiers' vote, and the partial enfranchisement of women and the disenfranchisement of aliens. Conscription and the issues surrounding it were widely discussed and debated in the Alberta press during 1917 and 1918. Papers considered the issue important enough to change their political allegiance in order to get on with the prosecution of the war. In order to understand these changes, it is necessary to trace the attitudes of these papers during the voluntary years of the Canadian war effort. Much of their early discussion centered around the loyalty of certain segments of the Canadian population and general support of the war effort in Canada. While some of this discussion may at first appear unrelated, it is necessary to develop these attitudes in order to understand what happened to the newspapers of Alberta during the conscription crisis.

CHAPTER II

CONSCRIPTION NOT REQUIRED

During the summer of 1914 the Alberta press followed the news of the anticipated war closely and reported that the Canadian Cabinet was discussing preparations for war at a meeting in Ottawa. On the evening of August 4, 1914, following a brief supper recess, the ministers of the Canadian government were continuing their discussions of war preparations. Prime Minister Borden later recalled that the meeting was interrupted at 8:55 p.m., when the "telegram arrived announcing that war had been declared."¹ Canada was at war. The British declaration left no decision to the constituent parts of the British Empire. The Canadian cabinet reacted at once by issuing an Order in Council which summoned Parliament on the 18th of August.² Parliament met on that date and passed all of the Orders in Council issued by the government prior to the emergency session and then proceeded to pass all of the measures which the government proposed concerning the war. Both in Parliament and in the country as a whole the cause of Great Britain was viewed as Canada's own.

Indeed there is little question as to the initial reaction of Canada and its people to the war. Both French- and English-Canadians were enthusiastic about participation in the war. This unanimity would

¹H. Borden, ed., Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1938), II, 456.

²Ibid.

later split along party and racial lines but in 1914 there was "no doubt in Canadian minds that Britain's cause was just and that it was the duty of the Dominions to support the mother country with every means at their hands."³ The Rowell-Sirois Report would later conclude that: "Canada had never before seen such a demonstration of national unity."⁴ While other sources⁵ referred to pacifist feelings and doubts about the war among certain groups, these opinions were rarely expressed openly and for "some time the solidarity of national sentiment" in support of the war effort "was the dominant feature of Canadian life."⁶

The national press supported the war. Headlines across the country carried the news and early editorials declared open support for Britain. It has been suggested, however, that the reasons for their support varied.

The Conservative press, as a whole supported immediate aid to the Empire, urged the outstanding loyalty of Canada to British institutions and Imperial connection, emphasized the many reasons for helping Great Britain in this hour of trial, dealt with the possible dangers which menaced the United Kingdom itself and Canada as an integral part of the Empire. The Liberal press led by the *Toronto Globe*, clearly enunciated the doctrine that when Britain was at war then Canada was at war and then passed to the basic point that the struggle in Europe was one of autocracy

³E. H. Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-18 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 56.

⁴Donald V. Smiley, ed., The Rowell Sirois Report (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1967), p. 110.

⁵J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review: 1914 (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Co. Ltd., 1915), pp. 138-42. (Hereinafter referred to as C. A. R., 1914, etc.)

⁶Smiley, p. 110.

against liberty, of the iron ideals of militarism against the democratic ideals, of universal peace and to the fact that Canada's place was beside the champions of freedom.⁷

The difference between the views of the Conservative and the Liberal press was only in emphasis, but the distinction was important. The Conservative press declared that Canada was fighting first for the Empire and then for "British ideals of peace and principles of liberty."⁸ The Liberal press, on the other hand, described Canada as "fighting for the liberties and peace of the world and, incidentally, for the British Empire of which the Dominion was a part."⁹ The English language press, led by the Toronto papers, declared that it was Canada's duty to fight. The Globe, the Star, and the World urged support of the war.¹⁰ The French language press, with the exception of Le Devoir, immediately expressed similar opinions as to the cause of the allies and the necessity of Canada coming to the aid of the mother country in this emergency.¹¹ Most reflected the following comment of La Patrie which hailed the spirit of the Entente Cordiale in Canada by declaring, "There are no longer French Canadians and English Canadians. Only one race now exists, united by the closest bonds in a common cause."¹² Initially Le Devoir had been somewhat ambiguous in its reaction; however, Bourassa clarified the nationalist position in an editorial on August 29 when he declared that, "without a

⁷C.A.R., 1914, p. 138. ⁸Ibid., p. 139. ⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Armstrong, p. 56.

¹²Patrie, August 5, 1917, quoted in Armstrong, p. 68.

doubt, it is natural for any Canadian to wish ardently for the triumph of the Anglo-French arms."¹³ Even Bourassa wholeheartedly endorsed Britain's entry into the war on the side of the allies.¹⁴

The enthusiasm of the national press was reflected and supported in the pages of the provincial papers. In Alberta the Calgary Herald announced that, "Canadians stand as one man in their support of the war."¹⁵ While noting the excitement in Calgary, the Edmonton Bulletin commented on "the patriotic fervor in western Canada" and declared that the announcement of the war had resulted in the "wildest night in Edmonton's history."¹⁶

When the war broke out, a provincial Liberal convention was meeting in Calgary. The 500 delegates present decided that partisan politics should be abandoned in the face of the crisis. A motion by Dr. Michael Clark declared that:

In the presence of the extraordinary crisis facing the Empire all matters of party controversy be temporarily suspended and that we pledge ourselves to support the Flag of the Empire with the whole moral and material resources of Canada.¹⁷

The Calgary Conservative organ did not question the actions of the Liberal convention, although it did inquire why the B. C. Liberals, who were also in convention, found it necessary to pass a similar motion.¹⁸ The Herald reported the action of the Alberta Liberals and declared that the Herald would support the government of

¹³Devoir, August 29, 1917, quoted in Armstrong, p. 77.

¹⁴Ibid. ¹⁵Herald, August 6, 1914, p. 6.

¹⁶Bulletin, August 5, 1914, p. 2.

¹⁷C.A.R., 1914, p. 659. ¹⁸Ibid.

Alberta until peace was restored.¹⁹ This declaration of support for the provincial Liberal government did not extend to national politics nor to its Liberal contemporaries.

While political animosity was receding, at least momentarily, among the Alberta press the Calgary Herald continued to place the blame for the inadequacies of Canada's naval policy on the failure of the Liberal Senate to approve of Borden's naval policy.²⁰ The Borden government had attempted to make a direct contribution to the British navy by providing the Imperial government with funds for the construction of three dreadnoughts. The legislation passed the House of Commons but was defeated in the Liberal dominated Senate. The Calgary Herald had earlier contended that the defeat of Borden's naval bill by the Senate was "solely responsible for the degradation of Canada in the eyes of the whole world."²¹

The Bulletin suggested that the responsibility for the inadequate Canadian naval preparations lay with the Borden government and its failure to adopt Laurier's naval policy which had advocated the construction of a Canadian squadron of cruisers.

The emergency has really occurred and whatever else it may or may not have shown it has forced the Borden Government to admit that the proposal to construct squadrons of cruisers, torpedo boats and submarines for the defence of the Canadian coasts was based on a correct conception of what would be Canada's foremost need and duty in the circumstances.²²

The Bulletin constantly referred to the naval forces of

¹⁹Herald, August 6, 1914, p. 1.

²⁰Ibid., August 1, 1914, p. 6. ²¹Ibid.

²²Bulletin (Edmonton), August 7, 1914, p. 4.

Australia and New Zealand which were present in the Pacific while pointing out that Canada had no equivalent force there.²³

While most Canadian daily newspapers reacted to the war initially by curbing their criticism of the government in the interests of national unity and the war effort, the Edmonton Bulletin was among the national dailies which remained strongly opposed to the federal government and certainly remained the most vehement opponent of the federal government among the Alberta Liberal dailies. Although it supported the war effort, the Bulletin as leader of the Liberal papers in the province often questioned the government's war preparations:

Premier Borden says Canada was prepared for war, the deputy heads of departments having prepared a "war book". In common fairness he should have added that the naval department also prepared a very valuable brochure on "Fish and how to cook it".²⁴

The remainder of the Alberta press also supported the war with the exception of Der Herold, an Edmonton newspaper published by W. Krankenhagan and H. Becker which maintained a pro-German stand until it ceased publication.²⁵ The Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald protested the stand taken by Der Herold and provoked the Edmonton Bulletin into a defence of the local German population.²⁶ The Bulletin accused the Calgary Herald of playing politics and exercising "a spirit of vengeance against local Germans."²⁷

²³Ibid., September 14, 1914, p. 4; February 4, 1916, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., December 22, 1914, p. 4.

²⁵C.A.R., 1914, p. 702. ²⁶Ibid., p. 663.

²⁷Ibid., p. 664.

The matter was discussed on the floor of the provincial house but a formal motion "for the suppression of the newspaper known as The Alberta Herald" and for "the prosecution of those guilty of the crime of treason or sedition in connection with the publication thereof" was defeated by a party vote.²⁸ Premier Sifton and the Liberal government took the position that it was the responsibility of the "Federal Government and the Militia Department" to deal with such cases.²⁹

The discussion surrounding Alberta's alien population provided interesting editorial material for the duration of the war. According to the 1911 census there were 36,852 Germans and 26,427 Austro-Hungarians in the province out of a total population of 374,663.³⁰ The press, as well as the population generally, did not launch any immediate attack upon the people of enemy origin in Canada at the start of the war.³¹ Statements in the press tended to be rational in their approach. The Calgary Herald "admitted that our Austrian and German fellow citizens are law abiding and peaceably disposed" and asked "how we could justify harsh treatment of them with accepted British practice the world over."³² Nevertheless, the Herald soon reversed its position and applauded the dismissal of city employees of enemy origin.

It is absurd that the city should be voting funds and the citizens subscribing to support the families of out of work Britishers while these foreigners were in steady employment by the city; under conditions developed by the war such a state of affairs is intolerable.³³

²⁸Ibid. ²⁹Ibid. ³⁰Ibid., p. 663.

³¹Ibid., pp. 276-76. ³²Herald, August 6, 1914, p. 6.

³³Ibid., August 28, 1914, p. 6.

With the increased publication of war propaganda, most of which came from the British war offices, the Canadian population began to react to the "enemy aliens" in their midst. Employment became extremely difficult for these people to obtain and dismissals on the basis of their origin became frequent. The question of the individual's loyalty to Canada and to Britain was often disregarded. The employment of enemy aliens while people of British descent were out of work was a constant source of public criticism and trouble for employers.

At the outbreak of the war it had been found necessary to prevent hundreds of German-Austrian reservists from returning to fight for the enemy.³⁴ The Minister of Militia was authorized to take measures to prevent these officers and reservists from leaving Canada and proceeding via the United States to Germany and Austria-Hungary.³⁵ On August 18, 1914, the acting Minister of the Interior, Honourable C. J. Doherty, gave notice of a bill to amend the immigration act to the effect that immigrants who were citizens of countries who were at war with Britain would not be accepted in Canada.³⁶

Nevertheless, enemy aliens had been promised that so long as they quietly pursued their ordinary occupations they would not be disturbed and would be "allowed to continue to enjoy the protection of the law and be accorded the respect and consideration due to peaceful and law-abiding citizens."³⁷ Other Orders in Council forbade

³⁴C. A. R., 1914, p. 277. ³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), August 19, 1914, p. 1.

³⁷C. A. R., 1914, p. 282.

aliens to possess ammunition, explosives or firearms; suspended patents held by enemy subjects; and required aliens to register.³⁸ The regulation as to registration of alien enemies was issued on October 28. Under the direction of Major-General Sir W. D. Otter internment camps were established; several of these were located in the prairie provinces.³⁹ In the course of the war, 8,579 male prisoners were interned along with 81 women and 156 children who voluntarily accompanied them.⁴⁰

The national press supported the government's actions with respect to enemy aliens and in many cases pressed for stronger regulations. The informal restrictions with regard to employment were often supplemented by formal restrictions at the local level. For example in Edmonton, alien enemy property owners were debarred from voting in municipal elections in November of 1914.⁴¹

The Alberta press was very sensitive to the alien question. The large number of aliens in the northern part of the province was often pointed to as a disloyal group by papers both in the southern part of the province and other parts of Canada. This issue was of some concern to Frank Oliver, M.P. and publisher of the Edmonton Bulletin since a significant part of the population in his constituency were of enemy alien origin and had tended to support the Liberal party. However, the Bulletin's sympathy for the enemy alien population did

³⁸Ibid. ³⁹Ibid., p. 276.

⁴⁰Joseph A. Bourdreau. "Western Canada's 'Enemy Aliens' in World War One," Alberta Historical Review, XII, No. 1, (Winter, 1964), 2.

⁴¹Bulletin (Edmonton), November 20, 1914, p. 4.

not extend too far. The Bulletin noted that some of the aliens who had been interned were receiving twenty-five cents per day for clearing ground for an experimental farm and commented that "there are a good many Canadian citizens whose chances of a living would be better if they were alien enemies."⁴² The Bulletin was always quick to point out that Alberta was a loyal province and was doing her share in the war effort.

The province with the largest proportion of foreign born people in its population is the province that sent the most soldiers to England in proportion to population. There is food here for reflection on the part of some who have represented the large foreign born citizenship as discounting Alberta's loyalty to the Empire.⁴³

The reporting of enemy hostile acts which Albertans found particularly distasteful often resulted in actions being taken against the local alien population. For example, following the sinking of the Lusitania, sixty-five employees of a Calgary leather company issued an ultimatum to their management to discharge all German or Austrian employees by Saturday, May 16.⁴⁴ The Edmonton Bulletin commented that the dismissal of enemy aliens was "in every way to be regretted though quite understandable."⁴⁵

The Bulletin, prior to the burning of the federal parliament buildings, had only mildly supported the internment of enemy aliens. However, on February 10, a Bulletin editorial suggested that

⁴²Ibid., January 29, 1915, p. 4.

⁴³Ibid., October 27, 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁴Ibid., May 15, 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁵Ibid., May 15, 1915, p. 4.

since the House of Commons was probably destroyed by "an incendiary in the pay of Berlin," the question of interning residents of enemy alien races would have to be considered.⁴⁶

It is of course a hardship to honorable and peaceable people to be deprived of their liberties because of crimes committed by members of their race. But this is a time of war and a time when there is being waged against Canada a sort of warfare that makes the extremist precaution the only course consistent with common sense. The blame for their loss of liberty will not lie with the Canadian parliament or people but with those who have directed against Canada and its allies a campaign of criminal outrage that demands every possible precaution on our part.⁴⁷

In the second week of February, 1916 there was a significant amount of unrest in Alberta over the alien question. The Bulletin reported the wrecking of Calgary restaurants by soldiers who suspected that the restaurants were employing alien labour.⁴⁸ In Edmonton armed guards were called out on February 11 to protect the Macdonald Hotel which employed aliens, and the offices of the Bulletin which allegedly had referred to the men of the 51st, 63rd and 66th battalions in derogatory terms.⁴⁹ On the same day the Bulletin reported the destruction of the Riverside Hotel in Calgary by a mob who had been wrongly convinced that the hotel was owned by a German.⁵⁰ On February 16 the Bulletin pointed out that British residents in Germany were interned at the start of the war and asked if we should not do the same to the Germans in Canada.⁵¹ Two days later the Bulletin

⁴⁶Ibid., February 10, 1916, p. 4. ⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., February 11, 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁹Ibid., February 12, 1916, p. 1. ⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., February 16, 1916, p. 4.

discussed the indiscriminate firing of people of alien descent and advocated their interning for their own protection.⁵² It argued that they would then be provided for and not simply left unemployed in the communities without any means of sustaining themselves.⁵³

By April agitation for the internment of enemy aliens had subsided. The Bulletin was quick to point out that Camrose, an area in which "80% of the population is of foreign birth" had set a record for contributions to the Patriotic Fund.⁵⁴ The country was now feeling the drain of manpower to the war effort and on April 5 the Bulletin reported that large numbers of those in detention camps would "be released to aid in agricultural operations."⁵⁵ At the end of May the Bulletin reported the release of other aliens to work in the mines of Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.⁵⁶ Indeed by September the manpower situation was such that the Bulletin noted the government was considering the temporary suspension of the Alien Labour Act in order to provide labour for munitions factories.⁵⁷ There was little change, however, in the government's attitude towards aliens. An Order in Council published in October of 1916 required that all enemy aliens with "no permanent place of residence or abode in Canada" report to the nearest police officer.⁵⁸ In an editorial on the new regulation the Bulletin pointed out that the war had been going on for two

⁵²Ibid., February 18, 1916, p. 4. ⁵³Ibid. ⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., April 5, 1916, p. 1.

⁵⁶Ibid., May 30, 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁷Ibid., September 21, 1916, p. 1.

⁵⁸Ibid., October 4, 1916, p. 9.

years and commented that, "In time of national emergency there was nothing like promptitude."⁵⁹

The question of the right of enemy aliens to the franchise was the basis of many an editorial in the press. In early 1917 the Bulletin again found it necessary to take exception to "certain Conservative papers of the city of Toronto such as the News, Telegram and Orange Sentinel" and their comments with respect to the Liberal governments of the prairie provinces.⁶⁰ These papers maintained, according to the Bulletin, that these governments derived "their support at the polls upon what these papers are pleased to call 'the Austro-German' vote."⁶¹ There was also "the very definite suggestion" stated the Bulletin, "that the disloyalty of these Liberal governments is what secured for them the support of the disloyal 'Austro-Germans'."⁶² The Bulletin replied noting that there had been little real disturbances in the West but that this was "not so in the loyal province of Ontario and in constituencies represented by Conservative members of parliament, i. e. Waterloo, Ontario."⁶³

On April 30 the Bulletin admitted that it was "entirely possible" that people of Austro-German descent would vote against the Borden Government "as numbers of them in days gone by have voted against the trade policy for which that Government stands."⁶⁴ The Bulletin then suggested that if "an intention to vote against the Borden Government" was the criterion for disfranchising people then "the Esquimaux and the Indians would be the only classes in Canada eligible

⁵⁹Ibid. ⁶⁰Ibid., January 8, 1917, p. 9. ⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid. ⁶³Ibid. ⁶⁴Ibid., April 30, 1917, p. 7.

to vote in the next Dominion election."⁶⁵ The Bulletin finally seemed exasperated by the charges against Alberta:

If some Ontario papers had worked as hard to inspire the youth of that province with the spirit of patriotism as they are now working to inspire the voters of that province with the idea that Alberta is peopled by traitorous aliens it would not have been necessary to ransack Alberta for recruits to fill up the ranks of Ontario battalions.⁶⁶

The Alberta press was quick to place Alberta's record of achievements in enlistments before the people of the province and to point out the inadequacies in the records of the eastern provinces. Quebec was not immediately singled out for criticism but reaction to Bourassa's position as reported in English Canada led the press in Alberta to notice the Quebec situation. The Edmonton Bulletin renewed its anti-Bourassa stand in January of 1915, a position which it maintained throughout the war.⁶⁷

On January 18, the Bulletin reacted to Bourassa's speech in Montreal on the fifteenth of that month by declaring that under existing circumstances it was not right that "a Canadian leader of public opinion should be allowed to incite people against active support of the war."⁶⁸ The Bulletin inquired about the government's inaction in the matter.

Can it be that Sir Robert Borden refuses to lock up Henri Bourassa on a charge of treasonable language preferred by the Toronto News because consistency would demand that he lock himself in the adjoining cell on a charge of treasonable conduct in

⁶⁵Ibid. ⁶⁶Ibid., May 3, 1917, p. 9.

⁶⁷Ibid., January 16, 1915, p. 1.

⁶⁸Ibid., January 18, 1915, p. 6.

smothering the patriotic impulse of the nation under the wet blanket of political controversy.⁶⁹

The Bulletin insisted that Bourassa's activities be curtailed. As to the recruiting situation in French Canada, the Bulletin found fault with the government. In April of 1915 the Bulletin stated:

The government's campaign literature maker represents the French-Canadians as so wanting in patriotism that a platform campaign is needed to coax them to enlist. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's reply is the declaration of the officials that French-Canadians have volunteered in larger numbers than the government would allow to enlist.⁷⁰

The demand for men, and consequently the accusations that French-Canada was not doing her bit had not yet intensified. In February of 1916 the Bulletin found it necessary to point out that in Alberta 600 of the 15,000 of French descent north of the Red Deer River had enlisted.⁷¹ The Bulletin remained critical of the Government's tolerance of the Nationalists in Quebec.

In Germany the preaching of sedition is punished and in Canada it is rewarded in the case of those claiming themselves nationalists Louis Riel's mistake was in not proclaiming himself a nationalist before he started to preach sedition in Canada thirty years ago.⁷²

The Conservative oriented press in Alberta was not pleased with the situation in Quebec. The Calgary Herald described Bourassa as a "noxious weed."⁷³ The Herald suggested that "to get

⁶⁹Ibid., January 19, 1915, p. 6.

⁷⁰Ibid., April 10, 1915, p. 4.

⁷¹Ibid., February 14, 1916, p. 4.

⁷²Ibid., August 29, 1916, p. 7.

⁷³Herald, October 24, 1914, p. 6.

to the secret of French-Canadian disinclination to fight the battles of Empire overseas" it was necessary to go:

. . . back in history to a certain occasion when Quebec province was solidly Liberal and Laurier, and when the premier of Canada gave such a splendid exhibition of how not to do things on the occasion of the Boer War, and Canada's participation therein. It was not the fault of the people of Canada that Canadian soldiers were not the first to volunteer for active service at that time.⁷⁴

The old racial issue was often brought into any discussion of the contribution and enthusiasm of Quebec province for the war. It was the bilingual issue which soured the attitude of both English and French Canada to the point where reason gave way to a "bitter dialogue of an unreasoning, accusing, and irreconcilable nature."⁷⁵ It was the bilingual issue, clearly manifest in the Ontario schools controversy, which foreshadowed the much more serious division on the issue of conscription.⁷⁶

Not only did the controversy over the bilingual schools of Ontario increase the bad feelings between the races but it also served to turn French-Canadians away from regarding the war as the primary issue.⁷⁷ The French-Canadian press in 1916 gave almost as much space to the bilingual issue as it did to the war news.⁷⁸ Some Quebec papers, such as La Presse and La Patrie, appealed for reason

⁷⁴Ibid., November 16, 1914, p. 6.

⁷⁵Mason Wade, The French Canadians: 1760-1945 (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), II, 694.

⁷⁶Smiley, pp. 114-15; also see Margaret Prang, "Clerics, Politicals, and the Bilingual Schools Issue in Ontario, 1910-1917," Canadian Historical Review, XLI, No. 4, (December, 1960), 307.

⁷⁷Armstrong, Crisis in Quebec, p. 153.

⁷⁸Ibid.

and tried to find some accommodation between the two positions.⁷⁹ Other papers like Le Devoir were partisan and uncompromising in their nationalist viewpoints on the bilingual question.⁸⁰

The press in Alberta reacted negatively to the situation in Quebec and demanded that Quebec do her share. It was not "a time to be making concessions to Quebec," stated the Calgary Herald, but rather a time for Quebec to "prove her right to be classed with her loyal sister provinces in their united support for the war cause."⁸¹

The Bulletin admitted the seriousness of the situation in Quebec but suggested that it was the government's recruitment policies which were at fault. It reflected the specific charges which were being made in Canadian Parliament, in particular the refusal of the offered services of General Lessard and of the posting to Bermuda of Olivar Asselin, a French-Canadian nationalist, and the battalion he raised for overseas service.⁸²

Strange is it, that recruiting is not satisfactory in the province of Quebec--while Mr. Bourassa is allowed to terrorize French Canadian officers by bringing disappointment and humiliation upon those who offer to serve their country and whose example and influence might infect their compatriots with a desire to enlist?⁸³

The government had finally forced Sir Sam Hughes to resign on November 18, 1916, mainly for his inability to work with the government and his interference with the co-ordination of Canadian military interests in England. The differences between Borden and his strong-willed Minister of Militia had been coming to a head for some time. Certainly his employment of poor recruiting methods in Quebec

⁷⁹Ibid. ⁸⁰Ibid. ⁸¹Herald, April 2, 1917, p. 6.

⁸²Bulletin (Edmonton), November 9, 1916, p. 9. ⁸³Ibid.

and his own anti-French views had done little to encourage recruiting in that province.⁸⁴ The Alberta press had expressed its displeasure at the actions of "Sir Sam" early in the war.⁸⁵ Even the Calgary Herald, which once described Hughes as "a minister of militia who knew his business"⁸⁶ returned to its original view that Canada was better off without Sir Sam Hughes.⁸⁷ "Col. Sam Hughes may be driven to the battlefield soon if he isn't careful, if for no other reason than to escape the consequences of rebellion here at home."⁸⁸

The Quebec situation was paralleled by the failure of recruiting generally in the latter part of 1916. Among the rising demands of some sections of the population which included greater efficiency in government, an end to profiteering and equal contributions from Quebec, arose a demand for conscription of men and wealth. Advocates of compulsory service often referred to the proposed adoption of conscription in Great Britain as proof of the necessity of such action.

The advocates of conscription were in disagreement among themselves as to the type of compulsory service desired. A large and influential section of the population desired a scheme of registration of the nation's manpower and resources so that they might

⁸⁴C. A. R., 1916, p. 250.

⁸⁵For a defence of Sir Sam Hughes see Charles F. Winter, The Hon. Sir Sam Hughes (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1931).

⁸⁶Herald, August 20, 1914, p. 6.

⁸⁷Ibid., August 12, 1914, p. 6.

⁸⁸Ibid., November 18, 1914, p. 6.

be most effectively employed in the war effort. Others advocated conscription directly--a levy on the men of the country or by "proclaiming the Militia Act and calling out all men of military age with the first summons to young and unmarried men between 18 and 30, until the 500,000 pledge to the Empire was realized."⁸⁹ Canada's authorized overseas force had been 250,000 until the end of 1915. In his New Year's speech delivered on December 31 of that year, Borden had declared that, "From tomorrow, the first of the New Year our authorized force will be 500,000."⁹⁰

The response to Borden's appeal had been splendid in the first three months of 1916. Recruiting slowed somewhat in the next two months but the situation was still considered to be well in hand.⁹¹ Neither the government nor the opposition at Ottawa was in favour of compulsory action, except as a last resort or in some extreme emergency such as an invasion of Canada.⁹² Organized groups throughout the country, especially the Recruiting Leagues, maintained that the voluntary system was unsatisfactory and requested "enforced military service or some well regulated system of selection."⁹³ On July 28, 1916 a conference of twenty-two societies "of every description" passed a resolution stating that "the present voluntary system of recruiting is wasteful and ineffective and should be replaced by enforced national service under a proper system of

⁸⁹C. A. R., 1916, p. 318.

⁹⁰C. A. R., 1915, p. 186.

⁹¹C. A. R., 1916, p. 303. ⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 320-21.

selection."⁹⁴

The Canadian press did not favour compulsion. Among the few papers which favoured compulsion was the Toronto Star which began its campaign for compulsion as early as January 12, 1916.⁹⁵ Others, such as the Saskatoon Phoenix, leaned towards compulsion but very few came out openly in support of it. Opposed to it were the Toronto News, the Toronto Globe, the Winnipeg Telegram, the Montreal Herald and the Winnipeg Free Press.⁹⁶ The Canadian Trades and Labour Congress was in the forefront of the opposition as were Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal party, and Prime Minister Borden, Honourable Robert Rogers, Honourable T. Chase Casgrain, R. B. Bennett and other members of the government.⁹⁷

The Alberta press had remained fairly noncommittal about the question until July of 1916 with the notable exception of the Edmonton Bulletin which, in spite of its Liberal character and support of Laurier, had advocated conscription from the outbreak of the war.⁹⁸ The Bulletin had appealed in an editorial in October of 1914 to the example of the European allies:

British people do not like the idea of compulsory military service, regarding it as an unnecessary restriction of personal liberty. But the present situation raises very sharply the question of whether such restriction is unnecessary. The cold fact of the matter is that had

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 324. ⁹⁵Ibid. ⁹⁶Ibid. ⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸A position the Bulletin maintained throughout the war. W. S. Waddell states that Frank Oliver believed that "it was impossible to apply conscription in Canada although in theory such a course of action would be 'logical'." This view of Oliver's position is not supported by the editorial attitude of his paper, the Edmonton Bulletin. See W. S. Waddell, "Frank Oliver and the Edmonton Bulletin," Alberta Historical Review, V, No. 3, (Summer, 1957), 7.

there not been compulsory training in France and Russia the British Empire would today be in a sorry predicament.⁹⁹

Following the advocacy of compulsion in Britain, the Bulletin began an open editorial campaign supporting the proposed action of Great Britain. "Declarations against compulsory military service," the Bulletin suggested, "should be addressed to Berlin, where the need of compulsory military service in British countries was manufactured."¹⁰⁰

The voluntary system is championed as a tradition of British freedom. But the judgement of British statesmen is that British freedom will itself become only a tradition unless the voluntary system is suspended.¹⁰¹

Oliver's Bulletin was never reluctant to question other newspapers as to their intentions, even in the matter of compulsory service.

The opinion of a certain section of Canadian newspapers seems to be that it is Britain's duty to adopt compulsory military service but that any proposal that Canada should adopt compulsion is a proposal to improperly interfere with the personal liberty of Canadian citizens. From which the logical inference is that the man living in Great Britain is in some way under greater obligation to preserve the Empire and save civilization than the man living in Canada. Just how does that come about?¹⁰²

The Bulletin pointed out, however, that since both "Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier were agreed that there should be no conscription in Canada" voluntary enlistments would have to be "relied upon."¹⁰³ The Bulletin then proceeded to criticize the

⁹⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), October 30, 1914, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., January 5, 1916, p. 5.

¹⁰¹Ibid., January 10, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰²Ibid., January 14, 1916, p. 7. ¹⁰³Ibid.

government's treatment of the soldier and especially the government's refusal to look after his dependents.¹⁰⁴ The Bulletin, while maintaining that the system of recruitment and conditions of service were inadequate, encouraged men to enlist.

Some Canadians think that the voluntary enlistment system is sufficient. Some think universal service is the only fair and adequate way to meet the problems of national defence. Both are bound by their theories to help along the recruiting campaign. It is up to the volunteerist to prove that compulsion is not necessary. And it is up to the universalist to show that the voluntary system is adequate only as it approximates universal service.¹⁰⁵

In March of 1916 the Bulletin again lashed out at recruiting methods.

While enlistment is voluntary nobody has a right to cast doubt upon the loyalty or willingness to sacrifice of the man who has not enlisted. When that is done the spirit of voluntarism is dead. Compulsion by criticism is compulsion all the same; and if we are to have compulsion let it be by law and all round in its application.¹⁰⁶

In its editorials the Bulletin often managed, intentionally, to place the government in a bad light. "R. B. Bennett M.P. says it is not likely compulsory service will be adopted in Canada. And he is probably right," observed the Bulletin. "Congratulations to the shirkers."¹⁰⁷

On Friday, May 26, the Bulletin reported the signing of the "Compulsion Bill" in Great Britain by the King¹⁰⁸ and on June 1

¹⁰⁴Ibid., January 21, 1916, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., February 22, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., April 24, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., April 12, 1916, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., May 26, 1916, p. 1.

expressed its opinion in a lengthy editorial.

In Great Britain married men are being marshalled to the colors under compulsion. In Canada single men enlist as they please or as they feel called upon to do. This would seem to be an excellent reason to forget that claim that Canada should be admitted to full partnership with Great Britain in the direction of Imperial foreign policy and the making of war and peace. If we are not willing or are not able to share with the people of Great Britain an [sic.] equal terms the sacrifice necessary to preserve the Empire what business have we clamoring for an equal share in the direction of affairs?¹⁰⁹

The Bulletin, as mentioned earlier, was not under the impression that Alberta was not doing its share but rather suggested that other provinces should be doing more. The Bulletin pointed out that Alberta "with about one-twentieth of the population of Canada . . . has provided about one-eleventh of the recruits."¹¹⁰

In September of 1916 the Bulletin argued that the government would find voluntary enlistment improving if it would announce that it "intended to enforce conscription."¹¹¹

The disloyal element know they do not have to go, and some who are not disloyal hold back because they do not see why they should enlist when others more favorably situated are excused.¹¹²

The recruiting situation continued to deteriorate and the government was forced to take action. As early as August the government had begun to pass a series of Orders in Council setting up a National Service Board.¹¹³ The first director of the National Service

¹⁰⁹Ibid., June 1, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹⁰Ibid., June 26, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹¹Ibid., September 2, 1916, p. 9. ¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Gerald W. Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force: 1914-1919 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), p. 325.

Board was Sir Thomas Tait, President of the English-speaking Citizen's Recruiting League of Montreal.¹¹⁴ He resigned on October 12 when his choice of a secretary was not approved by the Prime Minister and his replacement by R. B. Bennett was reported in the Edmonton Bulletin on October 16, 1916.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister tried to counter the recruiting situation by establishing the National Services Commission and toured the country making appeals for recruits in speeches at Montreal, Quebec, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Regina and Toronto.¹¹⁶

In a speech delivered in Edmonton on December 14, R. B. Bennett, who was accompanying Borden, stated that "this is the last great voluntary appeal."¹¹⁷ On December 15, the Bulletin outlined the case for National Service and again suggested that compulsion might be employed if other means failed.¹¹⁸ While its editorials encouraged National Service, the Bulletin had some reservations about the system of registration. The Bulletin suggested that this system could detract from recruiting by offering local employment as an alternative to military service overseas.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, it would not help the deteriorating recruiting situation in Quebec. "The nationalists

¹¹⁴C. A. R., 1916, p. 325.

¹¹⁵Bulletin, October 16, 1916, p. 1.

¹¹⁶C. A. R., 1916, p. 251.

¹¹⁷Bulletin (Edmonton), December 14, 1916, p. 1.

¹¹⁸Ibid., December 15, 1916, p. 5.

¹¹⁹Ibid., December 19, 1916, p. 5.

should be forced to do their share," suggested the Bulletin, "not by taking jobs which they are not entitled to but by forcing them to enlist."¹²⁰

On December 27, the Bulletin reported that Borden, in a special dispatch to the Winnipeg Telegram dated in Ottawa the day before, had refused to promise that there would be no conscription.¹²¹ By the end of 1916, the Bulletin had become rather exasperated with the government and its inaction over conscription.

Some of Sir R. Borden's newspaper friends are still anxiously concerned lest he be suspected of an intention to adopt compulsory military service. Where they find occasion for any such fear is a mystery. Sir Robert has said very emphatically that the Government will not adopt compulsory service, the Minister of the Interior has said it, the Minister of Justice has said it, and the Director of National Service has said it. That ought to relieve any apprehension that anybody will suspect the Government of any intention to put the country on a war footing.¹²²

The Bulletin's concluding editorial comment for the year on national service was indicative of its opinion of the Government's National Service programme. "The Real National Service of Canada is being rendered in France, not in the munitions factories nor on the farm."¹²³

¹²⁰Ibid. ¹²¹Ibid., December 27, 1916, p. 2.

¹²²Ibid., December 29, 1916, p. 7.

¹²³Ibid., December 30, 1916, p. 9.

CHAPTER III

CONSCRIPTION, A NECESSITY

The new year began without the usual optimism associated with a new calendar year. The official New Year's messages lauded the people of Alberta for their support of the war effort during 1916 but stressed that even greater sacrifices would be necessary in 1917.¹ The problem of recruits and other problems associated with the war received much discussion in the Alberta press during the first four months of 1917. Why were they so concerned about recruits?

First and foremost, the war was not going well for the allies and more reinforcements were required. An Ottawa dispatch of January 3, 1917 noted that 178,537 recruits were secured during 1916 bringing the official total to 383,955 Canadians serving in His Majesty's forces.² These figures seem quite impressive until one studies the monthly enlistments which were also supplied. These figures follow, as well as a district breakdown of recruits to the end of 1916.

| Recruits obtained in 1916: ³ | | Totals to December 31, 1916 by district: | |
|---|--------|---|--------|
| January | 29,212 | Toronto | 85,384 |
| February | 26,658 | Manitoba & | |
| March | 32,819 | Saskatchewan | 77,254 |
| April | 23,289 | Kingston | 41,204 |
| May | 15,099 | British | |
| June | 10,796 | Columbia | 37,575 |
| July | 8,675 | Alberta | 34,517 |
| August | 7,267 | Montreal | 33,993 |

¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), January 2, 1917, p. 1.

² Ibid., January 4, 1917, p. 5. ³ Ibid.

| | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|
| September | 6,357 | London | 31,325 |
| October | 6,035 | Quebec | 7,729 |
| November | 6,548 | Maritime | |
| December | 5,791 | Provinces | 34,802 |

The source of concern was obvious. The voluntary system of recruiting was producing fewer and fewer recruits as the war progressed. The drastic reduction in the number of recruits volunteering and the increasing need for reinforcements in Europe were the reasons why this issue became an important point of discussion in the press. Alberta's record was certainly satisfactory although the Edmonton Bulletin felt that the 34,517 recruits listed for Alberta were too low and the figures for the other military districts "with the possible exception of London" were increased "by the ten thousand or more men recruited in this province for battalions, batteries, and service units outside of Alberta."⁴ Nevertheless, it was the monthly totals that the government was concerned with and when the number of recruits for the first two weeks of January was released, 3,536 for Canada with 142 from Alberta, the press also registered its concern.⁵

The Alberta press continued its discussion of the government's national registration scheme and speculated as to what the government would do with the information collected. The Calgary Herald reported that Sir Robert Borden had "intimated that more drastic measures would be employed in mobilizing the manpower of the country for the successful prosecution of the world wide war."⁶ The national

⁴Ibid., January 6, 1917, p. 9.

⁵Ibid., January 18, 1917, p. 1.

⁶Herald, January 2, 1917, p. 1.

registrar, the Honourable Robert Rogers, suggested that returned soldiers should be employed in registering the manpower of Canada and stated that "the days of voluntary recruiting were practically at an end" and that "more efficient measures would have to be taken to fill up the ranks of the Canadian expeditionary force."⁷ Did this mean that there would be conscription? The Edmonton Bulletin questioned the government's intentions.

Mr. Bennett says it would be folly, if not criminal, to try to enforce conscription in Quebec. Mr. Rogers says there will be conscription. Sir Robert Borden flatly declared in the House of Commons that there would be no conscription, and now hedges by saying he will not bind the Government as to the future. The only theory that seems to meet the case is that the Government hope to induce the Nationalists to take well-paid jobs in munition factories and intend to then apply conscription for military service to the parts of the country where it is not needed but is popular.⁸

The Bulletin also questioned the value of the National Service registration and suggested that the only way it could be effective would be to make registration compulsory "and to have military service as its primary purpose."⁹ While government officials, in particular R. B. Bennett, insisted that the National Service registration was not for military service, Quebec and organized labour voiced their opinion to the contrary.¹⁰

The response from Quebec was very poor and organized labour declared it was against registration.¹¹ Although the Alberta Federation of Labour was in favour of National Service which would

⁷Ibid. ⁸Bulletin, January 6, 1917, p. 9.

⁹Ibid., January 9, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁰Calgary Herald, January 6, 1917, p. 1. ¹¹Ibid.

mean "mobilizing natural resources,"¹² it supported the standard demand of labour that there be conscription of wealth as well as conscription of men.¹³ This idea received some support in the western Canadian press, especially in the Grain Growers Guide¹⁴ and later in the Edmonton Bulletin.¹⁵ When R. B. Bennett suggested that labour opposition to National Service was being engineered by enemy agents, even the Calgary Herald suggested that "he was permitting enthusiasm to run away with his customary good common sense."¹⁶

The campaign for compulsory military service gained many adherents in the west and was accompanied by a demand for a national government. The Borden government had been criticized by the Liberal papers throughout 1916 but in early 1917 even its own supporters were finding little cause for satisfaction. The National Service scheme had not produced the desired results and the editorial comment on war profiteering was on the increase.¹⁷ The Ross Rifle controversy continued to embarrass the government. While Sir Sam Hughes, the former Minister of Militia, refused to admit that anything was wrong with the Ross Rifle,¹⁸ the anti-government press, notably the Edmonton Bulletin, was declaring that it was "not loyal service to Canada to send our young volunteers armed with inefficient rifles to

¹²Ibid., January 18, 1917, p. 3. ¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Grain Growers Guide, January 10, 1917, p. 5.

¹⁵Bulletin, January 5, 1917, p. 7; March 2, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁶Herald, January 18, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁷Bulletin (Edmonton), February 3, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁸Calgary Herald, February 3, 1917, p. 1.

meet the picked troops of Europe."¹⁹ In this case, "inefficiency is treason,"²⁰ declared the Bulletin, never one to excuse the government for its actions.

In early February, the Alberta press turned its attention away from federal affairs momentarily as it considered the prospect of a provincial election. The Calgary Herald suggested that the election in Alberta was unnecessary²¹ and objected to the government's proposal to provide two seats for servicemen overseas.²² Although Sifton seemed open to the idea of an extension for a definite period of time, the Liberals shortly thereafter refused to consider any extension of the Legislature²³ and the Conservatives found themselves faced with an election at a time when circumstances were against them.²⁴

Although no formal announcement concerning the election was made until later, it was clear from the legislative programme of the Liberals that an election was in the offing.²⁵ The government passed two acts--the first was a special Act of the Legislature which allowed twelve members of the Legislature who were committed to overseas service to retain their seats.²⁶ The second Act was the one

¹⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), February 3, 1917, p. 9. ²⁰Ibid.

²¹Herald, February 12, 1917, p. 1.

²²Lewis G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 169.

²³Edmonton Journal, February 12, 1917, p. 1; February 23, 1917, p. 1.

²⁴C.A.R., 1917, p. 801.

²⁵Thomas, p. 169. ²⁶Ibid.

objected to by the Calgary Herald.²⁷ Under the provisions of this Act, two members would be nominated and elected to the Legislature directly by members of the armed forces service overseas who were normally residents of Alberta. These members at large were objected to by the Conservatives as a government attempt to hive the vote.²⁸ The Conservatives proposed an amendment which would have allowed Albertans in the services to vote in their own constituencies but it failed. The Calgary Herald inquired why the government had found it impossible to allow soldiers to vote in the normal way when soldiers from British Columbia had done so.²⁹

The government had also extended the franchise to a large number of women.³⁰ Women were generally pleased with the prohibition stand of the Alberta government and many prominent women openly voiced their support for the Sifton government.³¹ Federal and provincial issues were often intertwined during elections and the Canadian Annual Review speculated that Laurier's opposition to conscription was a factor that influenced the naturalized citizens of the province to support the Liberal government.³² The Conservatives immediately objected to the right of the foreign born of enemy alien origin to the franchise and although the Conservatives tried to keep conscription out of the election, they later complained that some Liberal party workers were identifying the Conservative candidates as part of "the war party in Canada and were fighting for the conscription of all persons of

²⁷Herald, February 12, 1917, p. 1. ²⁸Thomas, p. 169.

²⁹Herald, February 7, 1917, p. 6. ³⁰Thomas, p. 164.

³¹Ibid. ³²C.A.R., 1917, p. 802.

military age."³³

The question of an extension, in this instance a further extension of Parliament, was also being considered at the federal level. Here the positions of the two parties were reversed, the Conservatives for and the Liberals against any further extension.³⁴ The Alberta press devoted editorial space to this issue. The Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald suggested that an extension of federal parliament was desirable, while the Edmonton Bulletin was against any further extension.³⁵ Other issues under discussion were outlined by the Medicine Hat News which declared for "a national government which would get rid of 'nationalists' in government."³⁶ The News referred to government mismanagement and was especially critical of the medical and other provisions, or lack thereof, for returned soldiers.³⁷ The News also called for the resignation of the Honourable Robert Rogers, a view which was shared not only by all the Liberal papers in Alberta, but by some of the Conservative papers as well.³⁸ The matter of recruiting and conscription also received considerable attention in the Alberta press during February and March of 1917.

The Edmonton Bulletin accused the government of "shirking its duty with regard to the supply of men."³⁹ The government, hard pressed to produce recruits, proposed an extension of the period

³³Thomas, p. 176. ³⁴C.A.R., 1917, p. 802.

³⁵Journal, May 5, 1917, p. 4; Herald, April 2, 1917, p. 6; Bulletin, February 22, 1917, p. 9.

³⁶News, March 1, 1917, p. 4. ³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid. ³⁹Bulletin, February 22, 1917, p. 9.

for returning the national service cards to April 1, 1917. In announcing this extension, E. R. Chapman, the Director of National Service in District 10 (Alberta), declared that there would be no conscription.⁴⁰ The government was now considering mobilization for home defence but Chapman insisted that no compulsion would be used in "Mobilization for Home Defence."⁴¹ This view was supported by the remarks of the Director of National Service, R. B. Bennett, who stated that "there were now enough men to drive the Hun back to Berlin."⁴² The Edmonton Bulletin suggested that these remarks by the Director of National Service were dissuading recruiting and were putting officials who were trying to enlist men in a most embarrassing position. "If recruiting is to be stopped by dissuasion, the expenditure of time and money on recruiting should also be stopped."⁴³ The Bulletin continued: "If there is to be no compulsion, either military or industrial, the so-called National Service scheme resolves itself either into a 50 men employment agency or nothing at all."⁴⁴

The confidence expressed by R. B. Bennett with regard to a sufficient number of men being available and his statement that compulsion was unnecessary did little to reassure Canadians. Rumors continued to circulate and a report from Winnipeg on March 4 aroused wide-spread suspicion that conscription was indeed in the offing.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Ibid., February 12, 1917, p. 1.

⁴¹Calgary Herald, February 14, 1917, p. 1.

⁴²Bulletin, March 2, 1917, p. 1.

⁴³Ibid., March 3, 1917, p. 3. ⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 5, 1917, p. 1.

The report declared that the Militia Act would be enforced within the next sixty days.

Reverend W. J. Hindley, chaplain of the 190th Batt. addressing his congregation in Central Congregational [sic] Church tonight stated that he was authorized to announce that the Militia Act will be put into effect within the next sixty days and probably within the next thirty days.⁴⁶

Hindley refused to retract his statement even though Sir Edward Kemp, Minister of Militia, declared that "no one had been authorized to make such a statement."⁴⁷ Hindley had suggested that the registration cards would be used to ascertain the eligibility of individuals despite government statements to the contrary.⁴⁸ Furthermore, a home defence force of 50,000 would be formed and continuously trained for eighteen months and "if at the end of that time"⁴⁹ the war was not over, they would be sent overseas.

Indeed the government was contemplating the formation of a Home Defence Force of 50,000 men and the formal announcement was made on March 17, 1917.⁵⁰ The measure was intended to make service more attractive to eligible men in the hope that they would enlist if they were to stay close to home. Underlying this was, of course, the idea that once they received military training, they would feel more patriotic and volunteer for overseas duty. The Home Defence Force would also free the 50,000 or so troops then in local training to advance to the front as soon as they were ready.⁵¹ The

⁴⁶Ibid. ⁴⁷Ibid., March 6, 1917, p. 1.

⁴⁸Ibid. ⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹C. A. R., 1917, p. 309.

proposal proved unpopular, especially when linked with Hindley's suggestions, and opposition papers described it "as a weak Government effort to avoid conscription and its problems."⁵² The Edmonton Bulletin declared that "under the present and prospective circumstances, Canada needs a standing army for home defence about as much as it needs a fleet of dreadnaughts in the St. Lawrence."⁵³ The Bulletin proceeded to suggest that the possibility of serious insurrections in Canada or invasion by Germans from the United States was most unlikely.⁵⁴ Military men doubted that men would volunteer for the home force but agreed to give the system a try.⁵⁵

On March 20, the Postmaster General, Honourable P. E. Blondin, speaking at Sorel, stated that the government did not contemplate conscription.⁵⁶ However, he was of the opinion that conscription would have to come if recruiting failed. He told the people that "if the country is in danger and we have to resort to conscription, it will be imposed frankly and above board."⁵⁷ Blondin later offered his resignation as Postmaster-General to take command of a French-Canadian battalion destined for overseas service. Together with Major-General F. L. Lessard, he began a special tour of Quebec in May to raise recruits.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, public opinion in English Canada was growing steadily more in favour of compulsion. N. W. Rowell, the Ontario

⁵²Bulletin (Edmonton), March 17, 1917, p. 9. ⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid. ⁵⁵C. A. R., 1917, p. 310.

⁵⁶Calgary Herald, March 20, 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁷C. A. R., 1917, p. 337. ⁵⁸Ibid.

Liberal leader, urged the "putting into force of the Militia Act, so far as calling out the first-class for Home Defence was concerned."⁵⁹ The Toronto Star regarded the conscription of men by selective draft as a fair system while other Liberal papers such as the Vancouver Sun advocated the implementation of the Militia Act.⁶⁰ Mass meetings throughout the country advocated adoption of the Militia Act as did some of the Conservative papers such as the Toronto Mail and the World.⁶¹ On April 4, the Edmonton Bulletin reported that enlistments for March were 7,063 and that the total for the first three months of 1917 stood at 22,792.⁶² The Bulletin suggested that:

Enlistment in Canada fell away for one of two reasons, either because the work of raising the army was not properly directed, or because men refused to respond to a properly directed campaign. Newspapers supporting the Government say it was because the public are indifferent about the war and that it borders on high treason to suggest that the campaign for recruits was not efficiently conducted. Strange is it not, in that case, that men swarmed around the recruiting offices until it became apparent what sort of management our war business was getting? Canadians, we are asked to believe, were deeply concerned in the war when it had no personal relation to them, but grew 'indifferent' when their relatives and friends went into the trenches to face the enemy's bullets.⁶³

With the announcement that the home guards would be counted as part of the 500,000 pledged to the Empire, the Bulletin commented that "it is just as fair to count the home guards as to count the Russian and French reservists, and men who went to work in munition plants," neither of which belong to the "authorized forces of

⁵⁹Ibid. ⁶⁰Ibid. ⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Bulletin, April 4, 1917, p. 9. ⁶³Ibid.

Canada. "⁶⁴ "But," pointed out the Bulletin, "it would take a long while to win the war with an army of home guards."⁶⁵

On April 9, the Bulletin suggested that "the army of young Canadians who fled to the United States to escape the recruiting officer" should be left in the United States to face "the United States conscription officer."⁶⁶ On April 12 the Bulletin carried a report that three hundred and fifty young men who had signed National Service cards in Guelph, Ontario had been notified that their services were required overseas.⁶⁷ The Bulletin then objected to the use of the National Service system as a type of "social conscription."⁶⁸

Of all forms of compulsory service the most objectionable and the least effective is conscription by the indirect means of squeezing men out of jobs or subjecting them to social ostracism and public humiliation. These tactics were to some extent employed in Canada in the earlier stages of the war, and they did more to disgust the public with the unfairness of the means employed than they did to develop the spirit of patriotism in the young manhood of the country. If they are to now be employed under the aegis of the National Service Organization there is nothing in the decision to recommend it, either on the ground of justice or efficiency. If we are to continue the system of voluntary enlistment, the enlistment should be really voluntary. If we are to have compulsion let it be real compulsion, applied by authority and applied equally to all, without regard to locality or person. How many young men in the Nationalist constituencies of Quebec have been singled out for notification such as has been served upon these three hundred and fifty in the Ontario city?⁶⁹

Pessimism about the recruiting situation in Quebec was found in all of the papers in Alberta which concerned themselves with

⁶⁴Ibid., April 5, 1917, p. 9. ⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., April 9, 1917, p. 9.

⁶⁷Ibid., April 12, 1917, p. 5. ⁶⁸Ibid. ⁶⁹Ibid.

war affairs. The consensus was that Quebec had not done her share and should be required to contribute more toward the war effort. The suggestion of the Ottawa Journal, that conscription should be applied to the rest of Canada but not to Quebec, received a poor reception in Alberta.⁷⁰

By a huge majority the people of Canada have decided that their duty is to assist Great Britain in the war. This is a country where majorities govern and to relieve the small minority in Quebec from its Canadian citizenship obligation would be to sacrifice the very foundation principle of our system of government--equal rights for all. There can be no equal rights at all where a minority is given preferences.⁷¹

During April, the Alberta press commented on a number of issues such as the extension of the franchise to women, prohibition, the impending provincial election and the extension of the federal parliament. One other issue which received some space in the Alberta press was the adoption of 'Free Wheat' which was established by an Order in Council as a war measure.⁷² This move was viewed by some Liberal papers as an indication of an early general election in Canada although the Conservative press, in defending the action, asked where "justification for the Liberal phophesy [sic] can be found."⁷³ Almost all questions were integrated with considerations of the war effort. The following editorial from the Wainwright Star illustrated one argument put forward by the temperance advocates.

⁷⁰and in English Canada generally,

⁷¹Calgary Herald, April 30, 1917, p. 6.

⁷²Bulletin (Edmonton), April 16, 1917, p. 1.

⁷³Calgary Herald, April 23, 1917, p. 6.

From the Pubic [sic] Platform, pulpit and press the urgent call is still for more men for service in the army and navy, in the munitions factories and in the field as agriculture. While this patriotic call is heard throughout the land, there is a business in operation which hold in its employment, men who if they were liberated might hear the call of national service. We are thinking of the men who are employed in the business of manufacturing, distributing and selling alcholic [sic] drink, which has been abundantly proved, does lessen the efficiency of the nation's man-power.⁷⁴

By the first of May, the recruiting situation was desperate. Major-General S. C. Mewburn, Director-General of the Canadian Defence Force, in a conference with officials at Winnipeg declared that no more men could be obtained for overseas service or for the Canadian Defence Force Scheme by "purely voluntary methods."⁷⁵ Militia officers declared that they were in favour of the adoption of compulsory service at once.⁷⁶ The entrance of the United States into the war may have had some effect on the almost total collapse of recruiting. The Alberta press agreed with the comment of the Edmonton Bulletin regarding American entrance into the war. "This is just as much Canada's war now as it was before Washington broke with Berlin," stated the Bulletin, and "Canada's just as much bound to put forth every effort it can to bring the struggle to an early conclusion."⁷⁷ The adoption of conscription by the United States Senate was pointed to by pro-conscriptionists as an example to be followed in Canada.⁷⁸ The Calgary Herald appealed for co-operation and further recruits in an

⁷⁴Wainwright Star, April 25, 1917, p. 4.

⁷⁵Bulletin (Edmonton), May 2, 1917, p. 1. ⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., April 27, 1917, p. 7.

⁷⁸Ibid., April 30, 1917, p. 1.

editorial on May 2. "The prestige of British arms must be maintained at whatever cost," declared the Herald and insisted that "our four divisions must be maintained" by a steady supply of recruits.

"Whether enlistment is voluntary or by compulsion matters little."⁷⁹

While the English press in Canada was calling for conscription in April of 1917, the Premier, Sir Robert Borden, was in London to attend the Imperial War Cabinet.⁸⁰ During his absence Sir Sam Hughes continued to insist that Premier Borden had requested him "not to press recruiting"⁸¹ and that this was responsible for the current slump. Sir Sam was never able to see the disastrous results of his own policies nor the fact that those who wished to volunteer had largely done so. The Calgary Herald stated that Sir Sam did remarkable work but that "insofar as recruiting was concerned, the cream had all been skimmed from the milk some time before he left office."⁸² It was for this reason and "not as he alleges," stated the Herald, "that he was urged to go easy with recruiting work that caused the great slump."⁸³

By the end of the first week in May, the Alberta daily press was announcing that there would be no more progress in recruiting without some form of compulsion.⁸⁴ On May 10, the Edmonton Bulletin reported casualties in the Canadian forces to May 8, 1917 as

⁷⁹Calgary Herald, May 2, 1917, p. 6.

⁸⁰J. Castell Hopkins, Canada at War: 1914-1918 (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review Ltd., 1919), p. 337.

⁸¹Calgary Herald, May 1, 1917, p. 5. ⁸²Ibid. ⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., May 5, 1917, p. 1; Bulletin (Edmonton), May 7, 1917, p. 1.

89,843 and rapidly rising.⁸⁵ The calling up of local officers aroused further speculation that conscription was indeed in the offing.⁸⁶ Speculation as to what Sir Robert Borden would say when he returned from Britain increased following the formal announcement that he would make a statement upon his return.⁸⁷

On May 16, 1917 the Edmonton Journal called for conscription. "We have long since tested out the possibilities of the volunteer system and the time is past for further trifling as everyone should recognize."⁸⁸ The Journal assured its readers that "the government would win support in circles where it never received support before" and in any case, the Journal found "electoral defeat" preferable "to refusing to take the action that, in the present emergency, is so clearly demanded."⁸⁹ The Journal also suggested that a New Franchise Act for the Dominion would be forthcoming if the Liberals opposed a further extension of Parliament.⁹⁰

In the midst of speculation as to what could happen when Borden returned from Britain, Premier Sifton formally announced that the date of the provincial election would be June 7, 1917.⁹¹ The Calgary Herald objected to the announcement of May 15 and argued that the people would have "little more than three weeks to consider the issues and make their decision."⁹² The Herald's reaction to the announcement was mild compared to the reaction of the Western Globe

⁸⁵Bulletin, May 10, 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁶Calgary Herald, May 15, 1917, p. 8. ⁸⁷Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁸Journal, May 16, 1917, p. 4. ⁸⁹Ibid. ⁹⁰Ibid., p. 1.

⁹¹Calgary Herald, May 15, 1917, p. 1. ⁹²Ibid., p. 6.

of Lacombe which suggested that "the greatest insult ever thrown at a Christian country is the springing of a Provincial election at this time."⁹³ The Globe continued:

When the very life of our Empire is in the balance; when our boys are dying by hundred [sic] in our defence; when our homes are full of grief and sorrow, is no time for an election. Sifton should be shown that his crafty political move is not backed up by the intelligent people of this province.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, Borden was on his way home from England and he would later comment in his memoirs that, "Upon my return from England on May 15, 1917, I speedily embarked upon an exceedingly stormy political sea, which was swept, from time to time, by gales of varying intensity and from many quarters."⁹⁵

Borden's formal announcement of conscription was delivered in the Canadian House of Commons on May 18, 1917 and reported in the Calgary Herald of that date.⁹⁶ Borden proposed a force of fifty to one hundred thousand men to be raised on "a compulsory selective basis."⁹⁷ The following day the Herald reiterated its enthusiastic support for compulsory service by announcing that the "Borden Government would not play favorites."⁹⁸ All other dailies in the province headlined the conscription announcement on May 19 and the Herald in a front page editorial announced that "Canadian editors" were "almost unanimous for conscription."⁹⁹ In the same editorial the Herald noted the reaction of other dailies. The Edmonton Journal

⁹³Globe, May 16, 1917, p. 3. ⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Borden, p. 697. ⁹⁶Herald, May 18, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁷Ibid. ⁹⁸Ibid., May 19, 1917, p. 1. ⁹⁹Ibid.

declared it "a great relief" and that the announcement "saved the country from a national disgrace."¹⁰⁰ The article included the Edmonton Bulletin among those in favour while most of the out-of-province papers agreed with the Ottawa Journal which regarded opinion throughout the country as being in favour of conscription. In fact most papers agreed with the statement of the Vancouver Province which declared that, "the vast majority of the people in Canada will be thankful that the voluntary system of service is ended and the country is to be placed on a properly organized footing."¹⁰¹ "It was a message of cheer for the men battling in the Hindenburg line," declared the Winnipeg Free Press.¹⁰² Of the twenty-one dailies quoted, only the Saskatoon Phoenix reacted negatively to the announcement--a reaction as much to the Borden Government as it was to the conscription issue. "Is the Borden Government efficient and representative?" asked the Phoenix. "Are we willing to give them the power of conscription? Not for a minute,"¹⁰³ answered the Phoenix.

While following through on their early support of conscription, some of the Alberta dailies were not without their doubts. The Lethbridge Herald indicated the position of much of the Alberta and national press at this point. The Herald believed that the Prime Minister was acting from "the highest motives" and that if the conscription measure was placed in the "hands of men free from partisan motives"¹⁰⁴ very few objections could be raised. The Herald continued:

¹⁰⁰Ibid. ¹⁰¹Ibid. ¹⁰²Ibid. ¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Lethbridge Herald, May 19, 1917, p. 4.

It must be seen that productive industries like agriculture and coal mining are exempted. Already too many men have been taken from these industries. It must also be required that conscription shall be brought into operation in the provinces behind in their quota of recruits at the present time.¹⁰⁵

Although exemption for coal miners was of special interest to southern Albertans, the exemption of farmers was of general importance and interest. Impressive support for making Quebec do her duty first continued to be found throughout the provincial press. "If the required number of men cannot be secured,"¹⁰⁶ stated the Herald, then we

can turn to the other provinces to fill the ranks, but only from occupations where production and public safety will not suffer. A conscription that would put Alberta and Quebec on the same basis would be unfair and objectionable.

Alberta has done its share, more than its share, in raising the half million allotted. Let the delinquent portions of Canada be conscripted first.¹⁰⁷

Reports concerning the situation in Quebec only helped to reinforce the attitude of those who wanted to force Quebec to do her duty. The Edmonton Journal and the Edmonton Bulletin reported on the crowds in Quebec and the anti-conscriptionist meetings.¹⁰⁸ On May 24 a front page story in the Bulletin described a crowd which gathered in Montreal the previous day. Estimated at fifteen to twenty thousand and composed largely of men in the fifteen to thirty year age group, the crowd had shouted "down with conscription!"¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Ibid. ¹⁰⁶Ibid. ¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Journal, May 22, 1917, p. 1; Bulletin, May 23, 1917, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), May 24, 1917, p. 1.

The opposition of organized labour was also noted as was support for conscription by boards of trade throughout the country.¹¹⁰ The Edmonton Board of Trade gave its unanimous approval to conscription on May 22. The Board held that conscription would prevent wasted efforts at recruiting and all labour could be organized. The Board suggested the use of prison labour for construction and urged the appointment of a food controller.¹¹¹ The opposition of organized labour was delivered to the federal government in the form of petitions.

On June 4 the Bulletin carried a resolution passed by a national conference of organized labour at Ottawa which recommended radical demands and urged all labour to fight conscription.¹¹² The announcement of conscription resulted in an increase in the number of men joining up.¹¹³ Reports from the front indicated enthusiastic support for conscription in Canada by those Canadians already in the trenches in France.¹¹⁴

However, this was not enough for some Canadians and several papers were objecting to the conscription of men only. Indeed

¹¹⁰ Edmonton Journal, May 22, 1917, p. 1; Bulletin (Edmonton), May 23, 1917, p. 1; also see Martin Robin, "Registration, Conscription, and Independent Labour Politics, 1916-1917," Canadian Historical Review, XLVII, No. 2, (June, 1966), pp. 101-118.

¹¹¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), May 23, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹² Ibid., June 4, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., May 23, 1917, p. 1; May 26, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., May 24, 1917, p. 1.

a section of the Alberta press was in favour of conscription of wealth.

The Lethbridge Herald pointed out that:

Conscription of wealth must come too. Unless it comes with or ahead of conscription of men, there will be strong and warranted protests that will certainly make conscription of men unpopular and unacceptable.¹¹⁵

The Albertan failed to find any indication of conscription of wealth and found this "disappointing."¹¹⁶ The Albertan had campaigned for conscription of wealth--a position taken by a number of the western newspapers, including the Calgary News-Telegram which was rather bitter at Sir Robert Borden "for announcing a form of conscription of manhood without first announcing a form of conscription of wealth."¹¹⁷ A large number of English-Canadians agreed with the Grain Growers Guide when it insisted that "every citizen should be forced to make an equal sacrifice"¹¹⁸ although not all of these would have supported the rest of the Guide's position.

There has been a large accumulation of wealth since the outbreak of the war in the hands of a few. Before demanding any greater sacrifice on the part of the young men it is only reasonable that the government should demand proportionate sacrifice of the rest of the citizens of Canada. No sacrifice of wealth can ever equal a sacrifice of life. But let the sacrifice of wealth be made in some measure approaching the sacrifice of our soldiers, and then, and not until then is it just to demand conscription of men. Distribute the burden and let us all bear our fair share. Let the government take a referendum of the people on conscription of wealth and conscription of men. The people have a right to a voice in the settlement of this great question.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵Herald, May 19, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹⁶Albertan (Calgary), May 19, 1917, p. 3.

¹¹⁷Lethbridge Herald, May 21, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹⁸Guide (Winnipeg), May 23, 1917, p. 5. ¹¹⁹Ibid.

The Bulletin viewed conscription with "general approval" but was quick to point out that while there was a "difference of opinion as to why the voluntary system failed to produce the required number of men," there was "no evidence of any hopeful attempt to revive it."¹²⁰ The alternative for the Bulletin seemed "to be compulsion or default, and default is not to be thought of if we still value our liberty or our national self-respect."¹²¹ In the following week the Bulletin continued to suggest the lack of volunteers was the government's fault.¹²²

The Edmonton Journal also commented on the "gratifying degree of unanimity" among newspapers on Sir Robert Borden's proposal and pointed out to the Bulletin and other opposition journals who were crying for the government to "do something" that they would have only "petty criticism to offer"¹²³ now that the government had proposed conscription. The Journal noted the approval of "Liberal newspapers of the standing of the Toronto Globe, the Toronto Star, the Winnipeg Free Press and the Vancouver Sun."¹²⁴ Initial reaction in the weekly press of Alberta echoed the opinions of the majority of the dailies. The Red Deer News noted the favourable reception of the conscription announcement by veterans and the boys at the front. "They are the ones that count. The fact that Quebec is included is the best news of all."¹²⁵ Other weekly papers wanted Quebec to contribute

¹²⁰Bulletin (Edmonton), May 10, 1917, p. 13. ¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid., May 21, 1917, p. 4.

¹²³Journal, May 21, 1917, p. 4. ¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵News, May 23, 1917, p. 4.

first:

When conscription comes Quebec must be brought into line first. The other provinces having made almost incredible sacrifices of their manhood are in no mood to stand for any further paltering and pandering to the disloyal element in Quebec. The Government might start with Laval University and make a first draft of the young fanatics of that hot-bed of disloyalty.¹²⁶

The Vegreville Observer freely admitted that it had declared that "conscription would never come in this country"¹²⁷ but now declared that it had changed its opinion.

Well our opinion is quite different now. Under the circumstances conscription is necessary and inevitable and the decision of the Prime Minister must be met with ready acquiescence on the part of the citizens of Canada.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, the Observer was not abandoning its partisan position and declared that nothing had been done by the government since Sir Sam Hughes quit. When Hughes quit, "the government went to sleep and has stayed asleep until the return of Sir Robert Borden from England,"¹²⁹ with his announcement that conscription would be resorted to.

The Redcliffe Review insisted that Canada should have had conscription at the start of the war. There should be "no delay and no referendum,"¹³⁰ declared the Review. The Chinook Advance disagreed declaring that "the government has done well to wait until the need for conscription became apparent to almost the whole people.

¹²⁶ Vegreville Observer, May 23, 1917, p. 4. ¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid. ¹²⁹ Ibid. ¹³⁰ Review, May 24, 1917, p. 2.

It has done well to act now."¹³¹ The Hanna Herald congratulated Sir Robert Borden on his decision.¹³² The Red Deer Advocate felt that selective conscription was overdue and objected to a referendum which would cause further needless delay. "There is little doubt the Government plans will have the support of the Liberal party--of the Western Liberals at any rate."¹³³ The Alberta Liberal press, with the exception of the Calgary News-Telegram congratulated the government on its conscription measure and then adopted a low profile while they waited to see which way Laurier and the federal Liberal party would go.

As Laurier debated what action should be taken, he realized that he was caught between the pro-conscriptionist and anti-conscriptionists within the Liberal party. His decision was also complicated by Borden's offer to form a coalition government. The problems of a party faced with a decision which could not result in any sort of unanimity resulted in the absence of an official Liberal point of view while Laurier, the traditional master of compromise, struggled to devise an answer. The absence of a clear Liberal policy caused the Edmonton Journal to observe that, "Laurier may be waiting for the Alberta election result before stating his stand."¹³⁴ The Journal predicted that Laurier would declare for coalition if the Conservatives were to make gains or win the provincial election.¹³⁵ This view of the situation in Ottawa was not shared by other papers in Alberta. After

¹³¹ Advance, May 24, 1917, p. 1.

¹³² Herald, May 24, 1917, p. 4.

¹³³ Advocate, May 25, 1917, p. 4.

¹³⁴ Journal, June 5, 1917, p. 1. ¹³⁵ Ibid.

their initial approval of Borden's call for conscription, the provincial Liberal press, notably the Edmonton Bulletin, refrained from immediate editorial comment on the developing situation. In the lull they continued the provincial election battle and simply reported events connected with the war.

The Alberta election which would be held on June 7, 1917 was of more immediate concern to the Alberta press. Those papers which were politically committed devoted more of their editorial space to provincial issues than to war matters. Nevertheless, the war did complicate the campaign and the Conservatives, during the session of 1917, held the view that there should be no election until the soldiers had returned home.¹³⁶ Whether the calling of the election involved an insight on the part of Premier Sifton into the future fortunes of the Liberal party in Canada or whether he was merely carrying on with the tradition of an election every four years instead of waiting for the full term of five years allowed by law is difficult to determine.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, it certainly was a fortunate political move, calling the election before conscription and the national government issues ripped the Liberal party apart. Conscription was only one issue which influenced the outcome of the provincial election.¹³⁸ The Liberal Government, although the election was not announced until after the session, had laid the groundwork for the election. The

¹³⁶Ibid., May 5, 1917, p. 4. ¹³⁷Thomas, p. 171.

¹³⁸For an examination of this and other election issues see Chapter VII, "Alberta Politics and the War of 1914-18," in L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta, pp. 154-187.

announcement of the election was headlined by the Bulletin on May 15.¹³⁹ Three days earlier the Bulletin had carried a summation of the legislation passed in the last year¹⁴⁰ and the issue announcing the date of the election as June 7 also contained an advertisement of a political meeting featuring Premier Sifton and Mrs. Nellie McClung.¹⁴¹

The Liberals campaigned on the basis of their progressive legislation and all rural papers which supported the government contained a large one sheet insertion--as large as four regular pages in the regular provincial weekly press. This statement of the "Progressive Laws Passed by Legislative Assembly" was introduced as an "Official Resume of the Acts Enacted at Recent Session, Prepared by J. D. Hunt, B.A., Clerk of the Legislative Council, so that Everyone can Easily Understand Changes Made in Old Acts and Scope of New Legislation" and every citizen was advised to "Keep this paper for future reference."¹⁴²

Conscription was not a large issue in the provincial election as other issues related to the war were more frequently debated. During the election campaign, the Conservatives continued to object to the Act which provided for two soldier representatives in the Alberta Legislature. Since these two representatives were to be chosen by Albertans serving overseas in lieu of voting in their own

¹³⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), May 15, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., May 12, 1917, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴¹Ibid., May 15, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁴²For a typical example of this insert see the Gleichen Call, May 31, 1917, insert.

constituencies, the Conservatives continued to view this Act as a government attempt to hive the vote.¹⁴³ The Calgary Herald addressed itself "to the Electors" on this question.

No voters list is prepared. Soldiers to the number of about 35,000 fighting at the front robbed of their franchise and offered a joke instead, while hordes of untutored foreigners, many of alien enemy origin will be driven like cattle to the polls to vote for Siftonian democracy.¹⁴⁴

Sifton was often confronted on the issue of the soldiers vote. In a speech at High River on May 22 his answer was "that no matter what else happened there would be 13 soldier members in the next House."¹⁴⁵ The alien vote question provided one of the most volatile issues of the campaign and the Lethbridge Herald noted the editorial position of the Calgary Herald by quoting the following editorial.

There is involved in the Alberta contest, the clear cut issue as to whether British people are to run their own country, or whether for the sake of keeping in office a miserable group of subsidy-hunting politicians, foreigners, even those of alien enemy birth are to be counted for their franchise while Canadians wearing the uniform of their king are to be ignored. That is the situation in Alberta today. That is the basis upon which Premier Sifton has called the present election, and by means of which he hopes to grab another lease on power. That is the principle for which Liberal candidates in Calgary and elsewhere must stand if they stand under the Sifton banner.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³C. A. R., 1917, p. 804.

¹⁴⁴Herald, May 22, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵J. E. Stauffer, the Deputy Speaker, was killed in the interval between the passage of the act which provided for the re-election of members on active service. This left eleven members who retained their seats automatically plus two representatives from overseas who were to be elected later. C. A. R., 1917, p. 803.

¹⁴⁶Herald, May 25, 1917, p. 4.

The Lethbridge Herald then asked if:

. . . the Calgary Herald will tell us why leader Mitchner of the opposition has so studiously avoided any reference to this issue? Is it because Leader Mitchner is playing for the large foreign vote in his own constituency and is willing to leave it to his henchmen to create a stench by raising the question in ultra-loyal Calgary?¹⁴⁷

The Albertan also demanded clarification of the position of the opposition leader and suggested that "the time to discuss the enfranchisement or the disfranchisement of the alien was at the last session of the legislature" and the Conservatives "should have brought it up then."¹⁴⁸

Actually, Mr. Michener had stated his position on May 24 when he denounced "the effort of the Sifton Government to hive the soldier vote as a deliberate plot to give greater weight to the vote of the alien-enemy electorate"¹⁴⁹ in Alberta. Mitchner claimed that the 34,659 fighting men and nurses at the front had been arbitrarily lured into two seats by an Act of the Legislature leaving the province at the mercy of alien enemies or other naturalized voters.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Mr. Mitchner remained fairly quiet on the subject and some of the Liberal organs suggested ulterior reasons for this attitude both before and after the election. Apparently there were a considerable number of aliens in Mitchner's own constituency which may have accounted for his relative silence. Discussion in the press indicated that the alien controversy was indeed an election issue. The Albertan asked for clarification of the whole question:

¹⁴⁷Ibid. ¹⁴⁸Albertan (Calgary), May 19, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹C. A. R., 1917, p. 804. ¹⁵⁰Ibid.

Do the people who talk about the alien vote mean the country should prevent unnaturalized citizens from voting? They are not permitted to vote now. Or is it that they would shut out naturalized persons of alien enemy origin from voting? No person has made this very definite, and a great deal depends actually upon what the question means.¹⁵¹

The Edmonton Journal declared that the disfranchisement of "all citizens of alien enemy origin" had "never been approved of by the opposition;" rather, the proper policy was to go after "individuals whose disloyalty is fairly open to question."¹⁵² The Journal continued in the same editorial to point to the fact that soldiers vote had been "hived" into two constituencies. "They are being discriminated against in favor of those of alien enemy origin, to whom the government is in many ridings making a special appeal, and therein lies the injustice of the situation."¹⁵³ This editorial caused the Albertan to comment that apparently "after all the excitement and turmoil and trouble and bad feelings about the statements of the disfranchisement of the aliens, the Conservative party has no intention of doing it, apparently never had any such intention."¹⁵⁴

The Liberal position on enemy aliens was outlined by the Lethbridge Herald.

If there are alien enemies who are a menace to the country they should be in the concentration camps. If they are naturalized British citizens who have become so under our laws and constitutions, we have no right to change their status. They came to us on our invitation and to escape the militarism of their own countries. To deprive them of their standing

¹⁵¹ Albertan (Calgary), May 19, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁵² Journal, May 29, 1917, p. 4. ¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Albertan (Calgary), May 31, 1917, p. 3.

arbitrarily would not be British fair play.¹⁵⁵

It was also suggested that it was a federal matter falling under dominion law.¹⁵⁶ "If the citizenship of this or any other class were to be suspended it would have to come from the Dominion Parliament," declared the Alliance Times, "not from the Provincial Legislature."¹⁵⁷

The campaign was not particularly exciting and the outcome of the provincial election was no surprise. The Liberals remained in power with thirty-four seats; the Conservatives received nineteen seats; and the Independents, which included two Non-Partisan members, obtained three seats.¹⁵⁸ The results were not pleasing to all parties and the Peace River Record, a Conservative supporter, objected to the methods used in the election.

Even though returned to power, the Sifton administration cannot hope for the support of the soldier members after the flagrant exploitation of the alien vote throughout the province and the contemptible attitude which Sifton himself adopted throughout the campaign toward the returned soldiers.¹⁵⁹

Conservatives also claimed that Liberal workers were using the conscription issue in two constituencies--drawing support for the Liberals by claiming that the Conservatives were the war party and were supporting conscription of all men of military age.¹⁶⁰ One of these constituencies was Red Deer where Mitchner, the Conservative

¹⁵⁵Herald, May 21, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶Medicine Hat Weekly News, May 31, 1917, p. 8.

¹⁵⁷Times, May 24, 1917, p. 4. ¹⁵⁸Thomas, p. 178.

¹⁵⁹Ibid. ¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 176.

leader was fighting a tight battle, winning by the narrow margin of twenty-three votes.¹⁶¹ At least one Alberta newspaper commented on results in this constituency.

Mr. Mitchner, leader of the Opposition, was re-elected by the skin of his teeth. A number of out-lying non-English speaking districts returned a majority for him in the eleventh hour. Mr. Mitchner will probably have very little to say about disfranchising the naturalized foreign-born voters henceforth.¹⁶²

Of course not all the weekly press concurred with this outlook.

The northern polls went solidly for Sifton largely if not wholly on account of the conscription cry raised by his workers a few days before election. If this is the plank upon which the Liberal party expects to work at the forthcoming federal elections it is well that it be known. In any event the Conservatives are warned, in the meantime we say to our friends in those districts that they need have no fear, the Conservatives will deal rightly and justly with them. We are sorry that they should have allowed a gang of election-heelers to fool them as they did on June 7th.¹⁶³

The naturalized vote was certainly a factor in the election and the Conservatives were probably justified in their assumption that most of these Albertans voted for the government. As to the importance of the conscription issue in the provincial election of 1917, it is difficult to determine whether it played a large part in determining the votes of naturalized Canadians. The Canadian Annual Review for 1917 declared that "the bare possibility of conscription and the known opposition of Sir W. Laurier to it was enough to influence largely

¹⁶¹ C. A. R., 1917, p. 802.

¹⁶² Viking News, June 13, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁶³ Mannville Examiner, June 13, 1917, p. 4.

the foreign naturalized vote in the province."¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is probably true that these people would have voted for the government in any case and the conscription issue, although the Conservatives attempted to keep clear of it, simply clarified the issue and increased the resolve of these Albertans to support the government.¹⁶⁵

Following the election, two issues were widely discussed in the Alberta press; first, the conscription issue and then "the Union Government" problem in which Premier Sifton took great interest.¹⁶⁶ The Empress Express declared that "all interest aside from the crops is focussed on the Conscription Bill which has been brought before the Dominion House by the Premier."¹⁶⁷ The Express also noted that "the general expression of opinion" was "very divergent."¹⁶⁸

On June 7, the Edmonton Journal announced that Sir Wilfrid had "blocked" the "effort to unite Canada against the domination of Germany."¹⁶⁹ The release of the correspondence between Borden and Laurier had revealed that Laurier had found Borden's offer of coalition unacceptable. The Premier's proposals included the dissolution of Parliament following the passing of the Military Service Bill and

¹⁶⁴C. A. R., 1917, p. 802.

¹⁶⁵For a discussion of voting patterns in Alberta elections see Thomas Flanagan, "Political Geography and the United Farmers of Alberta," in The Twenties in Western Canada, Mercury Series, edited by S. M. Trofimenkoff (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, 1972), pp. 143-59.

¹⁶⁶C. A. R., 1917, p. 807.

¹⁶⁷Empress Express, June 14, 1917, p. 4. ¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Journal, June 7, 1917, p. 1.

an appeal to the country for support for the coalition government before the Military Service Bill was enforced.¹⁷⁰ The offer "had been as fair as Borden could make it."¹⁷¹ Laurier could name half the ministers and have a voice in policy but Laurier turned down the offer. His reasons were not clear, although one of his biographers suggests that the fact that Laurier would have to stand with Borden in favour of conscription, without prior direction from the people in the form of a referendum or election first, influenced his decision.¹⁷² Borden wanted coalition, the Act passed, and then an election before the Act was enforced; Laurier wanted a referendum or election, then possibly a coalition, and finally the passage and enforcement of the Military Service Act.

The Liberal press was silent no longer. The Edmonton Bulletin expressed its views on rumors which stated that Borden was trying to induce individual Liberals who favoured conscription into a coalition government.

Sir Robert Borden announced conscription apparently without previously consulting either his colleagues or the Opposition. But when he found conscription defied by his Nationalist friends in Quebec and objected to by some important elements outside Quebec, he proposed to take some Liberals into the Government in hope that they would extricate him from the situation into which he had put himself.¹⁷³

The Bulletin suggested that Borden believed "in going to

¹⁷⁰For a discussion of Borden's position see R. Craig Brown, "The Political Ideas of the Prime Ministers of Canada," in The Political Ideas of the Prime Ministers of Canada, edited by Marcel Hamelin (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1969).

¹⁷¹Joseph Schull, Laurier: The First Canadian (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Ltd., 1966), p. 581.

¹⁷²Ibid. ¹⁷³Bulletin, June 9, 1917, p. 7.

the country for a mandate" with the support and under the banner of a coalition "which he has failed to organize."¹⁷⁴ The Bulletin then questioned Borden's leadership in an editorial entitled "Sir Robert Borden should quit."¹⁷⁵ On the same day, June 9, the Calgary Albertan criticized the method with which Borden introduced his conscription legislation and suggested that Borden had pushed some supporters of conscription into the opposing camp by the timing of his offer of coalition.

Sir Robert Borden made a tactical blunder in the time and manner of offering coalition. The time for a coalition government was at the beginning of the war. The time that it was offered was after the last resort conscription had been decided upon. The government has conducted the affairs and adopted a very extreme policy, and then asked the opposition to walk in and assume the responsibility for it.¹⁷⁶

On June 11 Borden introduced the Military Service Bill into the House. The following day the Edmonton Bulletin admitted that coalition might be necessary for the introduction of conscription and agreed that the leader must come from "the Conservative-Nationalist section as it is the largest," but denied Sir Robert Borden's "right to lead because of his blunders."¹⁷⁷ The Bulletin maintained its position concerning coalition and conscription for the next few days.

The Calgary Herald described the Military Service Bill as an act that had "been carefully thought out" and stated that "total exemptions are not numerous and there can be little fault found with the measure on this score."¹⁷⁸ The Herald gave an elaborate

¹⁷⁴Ibid. ¹⁷⁵Ibid. ¹⁷⁶Albertan, June 9, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷Bulletin, June 12, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁷⁸Herald, June 12, 1917, p. 6.

explanation of the act and declared that "we must keep faith with our brave men in the firing line."¹⁷⁹ If the bill was defeated when the measure came to a vote, then there would be a general election resulting in unnecessary delay. The Herald suggested that the "Liberals working to save their party may kill conscription."¹⁸⁰ In the same front page story, the Calgary Herald announced that the government was to conscript wealth although editorially the Herald did not seem as confident of the government's programme concerning the conscription of wealth.¹⁸¹ "The Borden government would be easing its own pathway materially if it were to deal with this phase of the national service problem now and in a satisfactory manner."¹⁸²

Western newspapers were not alone in their advocacy of this issue. The issue of conscription of wealth was introduced into the Dominion House by the Honourable George P. Graham who planned to move an amendment to the motion to go into supply in order to give members of the opposition an opportunity to express their views as to what steps they thought should be taken by the government in addition to the conscription of men.¹⁸³ The Bulletin carried the actual wording of Mr. Graham's resolution.

That in the opinion of this house it is desirable that steps should be taken forthwith by the government to provide that accumulated wealth should contribute immediately and effectively to the cost of the war; and that all agricultural, industrial, transportation and national resources of the country should be organized forthwith so as to ensure the greatest possible

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 7. ¹⁸⁰Ibid., June 13, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁸¹Ibid. ¹⁸²Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁸³Bulletin (Edmonton), June 14, 1917, p. 1.

assistance to the empire in the war and to reduce the cost of living to the Canadian people.¹⁸⁴

Other Liberal papers insisted that the conscription bill was not inclusive enough and one of the popular demands continued to be a call for conscription of wealth and resources.

The Military Services Bill considered by itself does not meet the needs of the hour, or reflect the views of the country. The concurrent conscription of all the resources necessary to the prosecution of the war is the only policy that can command Liberal support.¹⁸⁵

The Toronto News agreed with the Toronto Globe and felt that conscription of wealth had been lightly disregarded.¹⁸⁶ Sir James Lougheed, government leader in the Senate, declared that the government had already started on the conscription of wealth.¹⁸⁷ Conscription of wealth "according to the government" suggested the Albertan, "is the placing of a small tax upon certain exorbitant profits."¹⁸⁸ "That is not our idea of the conscription of wealth,"¹⁸⁹ declared the Albertan.

It amounts to nothing at all. To suggest that the man of money who yields a pittance of his enormous profits, most of which are due to war activity, is making a sacrifice which can be compared in any way to the conscription of man power, is toying with a serious situation. That is no sacrifice at all Let us have real conscription of wealth.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Toronto Globe quoted in the Medicine Hat Weekly News, June 24, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶Toronto News quoted in the Bulletin (Edmonton), June 25, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷Albertan (Calgary), June 27, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., p. 3. ¹⁸⁹Ibid. ¹⁹⁰Ibid.

The Bulletin agreed with this position but did not comment on the outcome of the discussions in the House. As the Military Service Bill moved nearer to the second reading in the House, the Bulletin reiterated its proconscription stand.¹⁹¹ However, this time the Bulletin denied that coalition would be necessary for the conscription legislation to be enacted and declared that coalition was now "outside the issue."¹⁹²

A coalition Government was not proposed for the purpose of introducing compulsory service. Sir Robert Borden announced his intention of applying conscription without consulting anybody outside his own party. He only asked for a coalition of parties to save him from his Quebec friends who do not favor conscription and to re-establish him in the Premiership for another term.¹⁹³

The Edmonton Journal found the Bulletin's editorial position somewhat exasperating. "Why does Frank Oliver not admit frankly that his object has never been to bring about compulsory service, but simply to injure the government?"¹⁹⁴ demanded the Journal. The editorial position of the leading Liberal daily was beginning to solidify. First, the Bulletin insisted that it stood for compulsion since the voluntary system had failed; a failure which the Bulletin held to be the result of mismanagement on the part of the Borden Government. Furthermore, since the Bulletin was a supporter of Laurier, this demand for conscription was accompanied by a request for a referendum. Second, the Bulletin advocated conscription of wealth as well as men and finally, the Bulletin objected to the selective basis of the Military Service Act, taking great exception to the manner in which people

¹⁹¹Bulletin (Edmonton), June 14, 1917, p. 7. ¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid. ¹⁹⁴Journal, June 14, 1917, p. 4.

would be excluded from the Military Service Act.¹⁹⁵ Throughout the month of June the Bulletin defended its editorial position against the Conservative press.

The Calgary Herald had predicted that the Liberals would support a referendum on the issue of compulsory military service and was proved right in its prediction.¹⁹⁶ An amendment to the Military Service Act, asking for a referendum, was moved by Sir Wilfrid Laurier on June 18 and seconded by Frank Oliver.¹⁹⁷ Laurier continued to pledge the loyalty of Quebec if the referendum on conscription carried.¹⁹⁸ The Herald speculated whether Quebec would follow Laurier or Bourassa if the referendum was successful. "Sir Wilfrid's real hope," announced the Herald, is "that a referendum would not carry."¹⁹⁹

The situation in Quebec was being aggravated by the reports circulating in English-Canada suggested the Bulletin. One of these reports referred to the "terrorizing methods of Quebecers" who were "threatening death to men who supported the government"²⁰⁰ on the conscription issue. The Bulletin also noted the opposition of the president of the Dominion Trades and Labour Council, who was "appealing to organized labor to oppose conscription"²⁰¹ unless there was "conscription of money and the nationalization of industries out of

¹⁹⁵ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 20, 1917, p. 20.

¹⁹⁶ Herald, June 15, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 19, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Calgary Herald, June 19, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 16, 1917, p. 7. ²⁰¹ Ibid.

which war profits are made."²⁰² The Calgary Herald denounced this stand and insisted that the announcement of the forthcoming income tax should be enough to silence the government's critics. The Herald agreed that no manufacturers of war materials should be allowed to make excess profits.²⁰³

The Bulletin not only pointed out that there was opposition to conscription as it now stood, outside of Quebec, but insisted that this opposition outside Quebec was far more formidable than that inside the province because it was based on the principle of equality. "If we are to have compulsion--and we need it--let it be compulsion all around, and all along the line of everybody and everything."²⁰⁴

After objecting further to the selective basis of conscription on June 20, the Bulletin launched into a lengthy editorial on the position of French-Canadians toward conscription. "It is necessary," suggested the Bulletin, "to go back to the year 1909"²⁰⁵ and the formation of Canadian naval service by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Sir Wilfrid's policy was attacked by "a group of men in Quebec calling themselves nationalists" who objected on the basis that "it meant participation by Canada in European wars."²⁰⁶ "When the elections of 1911 were held, the Conservative party made a secret alliance with the Nationalists"²⁰⁷ in which they divided the constituencies between them so they would not run against each other in any particular

²⁰²Ibid. ²⁰³Calgary Herald, June 14, 1917, p. 6.

²⁰⁴Bulletin (Edmonton), June 16, 1917, p. 7.

²⁰⁵Ibid., June 20, 1917, p. 7.

²⁰⁶Ibid. ²⁰⁷Ibid.

constituency.

The attack against Laurier [in 1911] was to be not on reciprocity which was popular in Quebec, but on the naval policy, which it was urged, meant conscription. Conscription was pictured in hideous terms. So successful was this campaign of prejudice conducted against Sir Wilfrid that with Conservative aid, the Nationalists carried some seventeen seats, and received in recognition of their services three of the portfolios in Sir Robert Borden's cabinet. The Nationalist party instead of vanishing after the election of 1911, gained a consciousness of its power which it theretofore had not had, and the present campaign in the province of Quebec against conscription is the logical sequence of these events.²⁰⁸

The Bulletin's rather unique analysis of the failure of Quebec to do her duty was intended to give credence to the position that Borden and his colleagues were responsible for the situation in Quebec. Further, it added support to the belief that Borden only wanted a coalition government to support his political position as it was certain that Quebec would not follow him on the conscription issue.

Meanwhile the Military Service Bill was progressing through Parliament. An attempt was made to put the conscription bill off for another six months but the amendment failed when some Liberals voted against it.²⁰⁹ Rumors were circulating that some Liberals would also vote against Laurier's referendum amendment and for the Military Service Bill.²¹⁰

The Bulletin objected to Borden's stand against a referendum. It stated that Borden's position was to allow the public to vote on conscription but only if they endorsed Borden as premier as well.²¹¹ The Bulletin maintained that the referendum was not impossible as the

²⁰⁸Ibid. ²⁰⁹Ibid., June 21, 1917, p. 1.

²¹⁰Ibid. ²¹¹Ibid.

Journal suggested, but rather it was the only way to give the people a clear voice on the matter.²¹² As far as the Bulletin was concerned, the division between the members at Ottawa was not as to the necessity of conscription but rather as to the "advisability of applying conscription without giving the people a chance to express their approval or disapproval."²¹³

The Bulletin continued to insist that conscription should be applied where it was needed and that, declared the Bulletin, "is not in Western Canada"²¹⁴ even though this view seemed to be very popular with newspapers published in Eastern Canada. The Edmonton Journal was not impressed by the Bulletin's cry that conscription should "be applied where it is needed."²¹⁵ For the Bulletin this seemed to mean that "a conscription bill should be, to all intents and purposes, simply a measure to compel the young men of Quebec to serve in the army,"²¹⁶ noted the Journal. Perhaps Mr. Oliver might move "an amendment to the Military Service Bill embodying this idea," suggested the Journal, "and ask Sir Wilfrid Laurier to second it."²¹⁷ Oliver failed to respond to this barb by his local opposition, probably because it was politically expedient to avoid further comment on this issue.

The Calgary Herald on June 28 again hinted at the breakup of the Liberal party.²¹⁸ The Bulletin found it "curious that

²¹²Ibid., p. 7. ²¹³Ibid., June 23, 1917, p. 7.

²¹⁴Ibid., June 26, 1917, p. 7.

²¹⁵Ibid., June 27, 1917, p. 4. ²¹⁶Ibid.

²¹⁷Ibid. ²¹⁸Herald, June 28, 1917, p. 1.

all the lamentation about the division which the conscription bill is making in the Liberal party in Parliament is coming from Conservative newspapers."²¹⁹ Indeed it was probably not so strange as the Liberals were still struggling with their stand on the issue. The issue itself was emotionally charged and papers often made appeals which would certainly find receptive ears in some segments of the population. The following excerpt from the Edmonton Bulletin would exemplify this.

Why should an Alberta mother who has voluntarily given one boy to his country be forced to also give the other boy in order that a mother in some other part of Canada may be excused from giving either of her boys? Particularly as the leading member of the Government from the Province of Quebec says there is no need of imposing that double sacrifice upon the one in order to excuse the other.²²⁰

Other issues tended to complicate the conscription issue even further. Senator Landry suggested that Parliament had no right to pass the conscription bill or any other bill for that matter as the life of Parliament had expired.²²¹ This was a question which was to be resolved in July. An extension resolution was proposed which would ask the British Government to extend Parliament for one year, to October 7, 1918.²²² The results of this vote, although the resolution carried eighty-two to sixty-two, were considered insufficient to justify an extension and an election was predicted. The votes were largely along party lines but six Liberals voted for extension while six Conservatives voted against the motion.²²³ The Calgary Herald noted

²¹⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), June 29, 1917, p. 7. ²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Ibid., p. 1. ²²²Ibid., July 17, 1917, p. 5.

²²³Ibid., July 18, 1917, p. 1.

the reluctance of the Liberal party to vote for an extension and held the Liberals responsible for the result. Moreover, the Herald suggested that the Liberals had turned down another chance for voluntary enlistment which they wanted.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had a golden opportunity presented to him in the statement of Premier Borden to the effect that he would be willing to consider a final appeal for voluntary enlistment provided it were understood the country were not to be plunged into a general election at once

It was all up to Sir Wilfrid and Sir Wilfrid failed.²²⁴

Indeed, Borden announced on July 18 that he would not ask the British authorities for an extension of Parliament.²²⁵ The question of exemptions also came up for discussion in the press. The Lethbridge Herald called again for the exemption of coal miners and farmers. If "conscription's chief aim is to raise 100,000 men for reinforcements," then "these must come from the slackers engaged in occupations not necessary for winning the war,"²²⁶ observed the Herald.

The matter of exemptions was discussed in the Dominion House and it was proposed that farmers be excluded from the Act.²²⁷ Meighen, however, insisted that it was not necessary to detail exemptions of this type as the clause was general and it would be better to let the tribunals decide.²²⁸ Nevertheless, the question of the nature of the exemptions which would apply to farmers continued to be a

²²⁴Ibid. ²²⁵Ibid. ²²⁶Herald, June 28, 1917, p. 4.

²²⁷Bulletin (Edmonton), July 11, 1917, p. 1.

²²⁸Ibid.

contentious issue in the federal house.²²⁹ The farmers in Alberta were indeed concerned about this issue and the U.F.A. continued to call for conscription of wealth as well as men. The position of the U.F.A. as stated by its Board of Directors follows.

Resolved that we, the Board of Directors of the United Farmers of Alberta, in executive meeting assembled, hereby affirm our belief in the principle of the selective conscription of men to carry on the war and the conscription of wealth for the same purpose. We also pledge our support to the government in an effort to intelligently and prudently carry into effect the conscription of men for this purpose, but in connection with and at the same time as that effort is made we insist that the government put into effect a systematic, just and equitable scheme of conscription of wealth of the whole country. It must be understood, however, that this scheme must embrace the conscription of wealth of all the men and institutions of the Dominion. The rate at which these incomes are assessed must be increased as the incomes increase.²³⁰

The Edmonton Bulletin approved of the U.F.A. call for conscription of wealth and suggested that if there was no time for a referendum on the subject, perhaps the government should introduce conscription at once, not when the elections were over. The Bulletin suggested that if there was time for an election, there was also time for a referendum.²³¹ The Edmonton Bulletin noted that penalties for infringement of the Military Service Act covered public speaking and publications which obstructed the law.²³² The question of press censorship was discussed and the Bulletin was unhappy with the result. The Bulletin predicted that the Act would not be enforced fairly and

²²⁹Medicine Hat Weekly News, July 12, 1917, p. 1.

²³⁰Ibid., July 19, 1917, p. 4.

²³¹Bulletin (Edmonton), July 12, 1917, p. 1. ²³²Ibid.

pointed to the differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

"Look at Quebec--newspapers and individuals are suppressed elsewhere but Government allies go unmolested."²³³ Nevertheless, the penalties for obstructing the Conscription Act included suspension for newspapers who published "articles derogatory to the Act."²³⁴ The Bulletin objected to the amendments which were "introduced to curtail Free Speech and the Freedom of the Press" and congratulated "Nicholas Romanoff Borden."²³⁵ Throughout July the Bulletin continued to hammer away at the Borden Government.

Meanwhile, the Calgary Herald suggested that the Honourable Frank Oliver was "making a name for himself which will not be creditable when history of the war is written."²³⁶ Frank Oliver, declared the Herald, exhibits "bitter animosity to anything Conservative" and consequently opposed the Conscription Act "regardless of anything."²³⁷ The Herald was running out of patience.

Mr. Oliver is getting to be an old man and much may be forgiven in an old man whose past record is one of merit. But there is a limit to patience even with the old man when he is becoming a nuisance and Mr. Oliver is rapidly approaching the limit.²³⁸

The Bulletin declared that to win the "war and to win the election"²³⁹ would be the Liberal stand. "Under Laurier we will

²³³Ibid., July 17, 1917, p. 7.

²³⁴Medicine Hat Weekly News, July 19, 1917, p. 7.

²³⁵Bulletin (Edmonton), July 25, 1917, p. 7; August 1, 1917, p. 2.

²³⁶Herald, July 12, 1917, p. 6. ²³⁷Ibid. ²³⁸Ibid.

²³⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), July 21, 1917, p. 7.

fight,"²⁴⁰ declared the Bulletin. The Bulletin was of the opinion that the Conscription Act infringed upon the personal liberty of 100,000 of the citizens of Canada.

With the election, noted the Edmonton Journal, the people of Canada will have a chance to turn out the government which proposes "to infringe on the personal liberty of 100,000 of its citizens."²⁴¹ Further, they may

place in office Mr. Oliver's twisted leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who according to the leading Liberal newspaper of the west is "inflexibly opposed to the compulsory enlistment of mankind immediate or remote." There is no autocracy in Canada. If the people wish to do nothing more in connection with the war, they will now have the opportunity to realize their wishes by returning Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Oliver.²⁴²

On July 25, 1917 the Bulletin noted the passage of the Military Service Bill. Twenty-two Liberals voted with the government conscriptionists, the total vote being 102 to 44.²⁴³ Borden had succeeded in passing the Military Service Act. Would he be able to obtain a coalition to enforce this Act?

²⁴⁰ Ibid. ²⁴¹ Journal, July 21, 1917, p. 4.

²⁴² Ibid. ²⁴³ Bulletin (Edmonton), July 25, 1917, p. 1.

CHAPTER IV

CONSCRIPTION AND COALITION

As the Military Service Bill was being introduced into the House of Commons, politicians were giving serious consideration to another issue for the first time. Although agitation for some form of national or win-the-war government had existed for some time in Canada, it did not become an acceptable alternative to the majority of Canadian public men until after the announcement of conscription by the Premier. Earlier suggestions of coalition had been rejected by both political parties. Partisanship had overridden the call for national government by some members of both parties and the press. Only after the introduction of the Military Service Bill into the House was Borden actively involved in attempts to form a coalition government and whether he was motivated by political necessity or by a true desire for a real war government composed of the best men available is open to debate and although the latter consideration is probably the correct one, the political benefits were obvious.¹

The Canadian Annual Review for 1917 described the movement for a united government as a "natural instinctive impulse"² and pointed out that by May of 1917 some form of national government existed in Britain, France, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

¹ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974), pp. 269-70.

² C. A. R., 1917, p. 553.

At the start of the war there had been an apparent harmony in Parliament and some members predicted a lull in party strife for the war period. This restraint from active dissension did not last and by 1916 and through into 1917 the Liberal press denounced Borden "as slow in thought and policy, lacking in all initiative, devoid of personal and political strength"³ and demanded his resignation. Demand for a change in government was not limited to Canada, nor was the desire for a change in leadership. Sir Robert Borden was the only original war premier in the world except for M. Radislavolf of Bulgaria.⁴

Neither the Conservative party nor the Conservative press were strongly advocating Union or national government at the beginning of 1917. They were suspicious of the Liberal journals which advocated that course of action and indeed had little reason to feel otherwise as the Liberal press continued to attack the government.⁵ Many Conservatives regarded the demand for national government as a ploy of members of the opposition who simply wanted to obtain office.

It was urged by such vigorous Conservative journals as the Winnipeg Telegram that the Conservative Government had subordinated party to national war purposes and was, therefore, a National Government; it was claimed that if Sir Wilfrid Laurier would not join in such a simple national project as a united appeal for enlistment and war service it would be quite impossible to obtain union upon all the complex issues dividing the two parties.⁶

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid.

⁵ Among these attacks were the financial criticisms of the Toronto Star, the vigorous onslaughts of the Toronto Globe upon Mr. Rogers, and the continuous criticism of the Borden Government by the Regina Leader and the Edmonton Bulletin.

⁶C. A. R., 1917, p. 556.

The Conservatives regarded coalition without Sir Robert Borden at the helm to be out of the question. The alternative of Sir Wilfrid or some unknown Liberal or Conservative would not be acceptable to the party faithful as it could be construed as a victory for the Liberals. Partisanship entered the matter at all stages for obviously if new people were to enter the government, some of the old guard would be forced to depart. This made discussions within the Conservative party politically explosive and indeed was the most obvious partisan reason for not openly supporting an alternative to the present administration.

Coalition up until the beginning of 1917 had been, as far as the press was concerned, almost exclusively a Liberal propaganda move, although it received some support from W. F. Maclean and the Toronto World, from Sir Clifford Sifton and the Manitoba Free Press, and from other elements not firmly involved in partisan politics.⁷

One of the first Liberal advocates of Union government was the Ottawa Free Press edited by E. Norman Smith which, on July 10, 1915, declared that:

... the formation of a Dominion Coalition Government, under Sir Robert Borden, if it is so desired, would be the truly patriotic thing for Canada's leading statesmen to bring about--patriotic for the Empire and patriotic for Canada.⁸

Throughout 1916 the Toronto Star advocated a non-party

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ottawa Free Press, July 10, 1915, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 557.

government, declaring on January 4, 1917, "There should be no party in office at this time." The Star advocated a non-partisan war administration and suggested that if Sir Robert Borden brought about this change, "it would be the end of his troubles and the beginning of his usefulness."⁹

The Manitoba Free Press saw national government as the only means of increasing the war effort.

A united National Government is important: United action by the whole country is more important. The former is fundamental because it is the only way of effecting the latter.¹⁰

On May 16, 1917 the Toronto Star, although continuing to criticize the Borden government for "inefficiency, incapacity, and weakness," expressed the opinion that the country would follow Sir Robert Borden if he would "institute food controls, put the Militia Act in force, and reorganize ship building."¹¹ Two days later the Star again recognized that the organization of a non-partisan government was the greatest need.¹² The Toronto Globe was direct in its censure of the Borden administration.

The failure of the Borden Administration was due to the absence of statesmanship and the lack of moral stamina and that in everything that effects the successful prosecution of the War and the welfare of

⁹Star, January 4, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 556.

¹⁰Free Press, January 6, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 557. For a discussion of the attitude of the Manitoba Free Press see Ramsey Cook, The Politics of John Dafoe and the Free Press (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 68.

¹¹Star, May 16, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 560.

¹²Star, May 18, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 560.

the people the Borden Government has signally [sic] failed to express the national mind.¹³

While the Liberal press appeared to at least prefer conscription and coalition, the attitude of official Liberalism remained cool to the idea of coalition and declared for the future in terms of party politics.¹⁴ Official party reactions did not reflect the growing enthusiasm for national government among the population. A better indication of the general feeling in the country was attempted by the Toronto Star which published replies from prominent people across the country to the Star's enquiry whether the time had arrived for a truly national government. Those contacted replied 70 percent in the affirmative.¹⁵ On February 3 the Star published replies from sixty-five prominent western Canadians; of these, 80 percent replied in the affirmative.¹⁶

Agitation for a national government outside of the press continued to grow. Various organizations declared themselves behind a win-the-war government. Win-the-war meetings were held across the country and local win-the-war groups were established. This movement culminated in the National Unity Convention which met in Montreal on May 23-25 with five hundred delegates present. "A Win-the-War and Canadian Unity League was formed with H. J. Gagne, Montreal, as President and Frank Wise, Toronto, Secretary-Treasurer."¹⁷

¹³Globe, May 5, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 557.

¹⁴C. A. R., 1917, p. 557.

¹⁵Star, February 3, 1917, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 559.

¹⁶Ibid. ¹⁷C. A. R., 1917, p. 560.

Success for the league in Alberta, however, was under question and the Calgary Herald gave advance notice that the "Win-the-War Convention proves failure as far as Alberta is concerned."¹⁸ No official representatives would be attending from the southern half of the province as notice for the convention had been too short and it was felt that the western delegation would be outvoted by the East.¹⁹

Agitation by the Alberta press for national government was centered in the editorial columns of the Alberta dailies. The unanimous support for the war initially brought about a brief lull in political animosity in Alberta. The sub-headline of the Bulletin on October 9, 1914, "Partisan Politics suspended in Alberta Legislature,"²⁰ expressed the sentiment of the members of the legislature regarding the war as did the unanimous acceptance of a motion introduced by Premier Sifton two weeks later expressing the support and the loyalty of Alberta in the war.²¹ Although various newspapers and groups declared a political truce, the actual lull in political activity was usually very brief and partisan politics remained a feature of the provincial political scene for the duration of the war.

As the war progressed, the press of Alberta reflected the deepening concern of the Canadian people over the war. The lengthy casualty lists following the Battle of Ypres and the use of poison gas by the Germans in April of 1915 brought the nature of war home to the Canadian people. The Edmonton Bulletin called for

¹⁸Herald, May 17, 1917, p. 5. ¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Bulletin (Edmonton), October 9, 1914, p. 1.

²¹Ibid., October 20, 1914, p. 1.

co-operation and an end to differences in an impassioned editorial:

We know now what the meaning of war is, of what the people of older lands have been enduring for months, and how and why it is that they have subordinated everything to the one thought of beating the enemy. Who with the vision of that wild charge at Ypres before his mind wants to talk of politics? Away with such trifling! This is too awful a time to fritter away money and energy in party warfare. There is only one proper subject before the Canadian people today: the war. And whoever seeks to divert their attention and effort from that is an ally of the enemy. The men who fell at Ypres have pledged us with their lives to devote ourselves singly to the cause for which they died.²²

The Bulletin's advocacy of co-operation did not, however, carry over to the idea of coalition which it described in the following terms.

Some of Sir Robert Borden's parliamentary supporters think it would be a good scheme to form a coalition government at this stage of the proceedings. So it would be--for Sir Robert and the party that has to answer for the last two years.

It will be time enough to talk about coalition government in Canada when the coalition government of Great Britain has shown that a mixture of oil and water is an improvement on both. And when the Borden government has shown that it has anything to put into a coalition other than an accumulation of liabilities.²³

While other western Liberal newspapers agreed with the Bulletin's criticism of the Borden government, they did not agree with the Bulletin's position on coalition. During 1916, their main concerns were the inadequacies of the Borden government and no Alberta paper launched a concerted effort for a national government until 1917.

As the year 1917 opened, the campaign for Union government began. The leading western Liberal organ, the Manitoba Free

²²Ibid., May 3, 1915, p. 4. ²³Ibid.

Press, declared: "It will require a united effort of the nation to substitute a National Government for the blind partisan leadership of the blind."²⁴ The organ of western farmers, the Grain Growers Guide, suggested that what was needed was a national government "in which both parties will be represented and in which organized labor and agriculture will not be overlooked."²⁵

Already a supporter of national government, the Calgary Albertan began its 1917 campaign for national government on January 5. Expressing its "lack of confidence in the administration"²⁶ the Albertan opposed any immediate extension of Parliament and declared for a national administration composed of the strongest men in the country.

In that cabinet, in addition to men like Borden, White, Foster and Meighen, we should have men like Laurier, Lemieux, Rowell and Clark. We should have Labor men like Watters and Simpson or Verville. We should have the ablest men of business and the fact that they have taken part in public life should not debar them from office.²⁷

The Albertan opposed any further extension of Parliament until a national government was formed--a government which included representatives of labour and agriculture.²⁸ After noting that no other "purely party government" in the British Empire had asked for extension, the Albertan gave vent to its feelings about the opposition of the Conservative party to coalition in an editorial entitled "Who

²⁴Free Press, January 13, 1917, p. 1.

²⁵Guide, January 10, 1917, p. 5.

²⁶Albertan, January 5, 1917, p. 3. ²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., January 16, 1917, p. 3.

opposes it?"²⁹

The pettier Conservatives, the little Tories are opposing the idea of a national government. That is to be expected. Even in the supreme emergency, these partisans cannot rise above their party. They are hopeless, and their petty untruthful criticism of the Liberal leader is as paltry as the spirit that inspires it.³⁰

The Calgary Herald thought that the movement for the formation of a national government merely complicated the issue and explained that Ottawa was suspicious of it because it involved "certain big business interests."³¹ "The latest political call is for a national coalition government for Canada," announced the Herald. "We say political call because it emulates from sources that are Liberal or near Liberal."³² The Herald insisted that a coalition government was not needed and declared that the Borden government was in a "splendid position so far as the conduct of the war business"³³ was concerned.

While disagreeing with the Herald with respect to the Borden government, the leading Liberal paper in Alberta agreed with the Herald about coalition.

The proposal for a coalition government in Canada appears to be getting about where it ought to get--that is nowhere.

We have had a coalition government in Canada for five years, which has been tragically shown to be at least two and a half years too long. A government composed of straight Conservatives, united in the promotion of a policy in conformity with Conservative traditions and ideals would have been infinitely preferable, even to Liberals, to the vacillating and uncertain combination of Nationalists and Conservatives that has

²⁹Ibid., January 8, 1917, p. 3; January 15, 1917, p. 3.

³⁰Ibid., January 16, 1917, p. 3.

³¹Herald, January 18, 1917, p. 1. ³²Ibid., p. 6. ³³Ibid.

squandered lives and money by supplying our soldiers with inferior equipment at hold up prices.³⁴

Indeed the Bulletin had little to say which favoured the Borden government while the Calgary Herald led the campaign for the Borden government and reflected the views of most Tories when it commented on the movement for national government. The movement

. . . had its birth in Toronto some months ago and which aimed at forcing the Borden government either to satisfy the demands of certain Liberals for cabinet office or go out of business. It is now called the National Unity and War Problems Movement.³⁵

The announcement of conscription superceded the discussion of coalition in the press for a number of days. Speculation about events in Ottawa related to coalition resulted in the immediate association of coalition and conscription. The Calgary Herald on June 2 recorded Borden's offer of a fifty-fifty deal to Laurier in a front page article while noting in the same issue that "Compulsion will be insisted upon if coalition goes."³⁶ The Liberal press found it difficult to assess events in Ottawa at this time and while noting that coalition was growing in favour, they held it was "rather late for a coalition government."³⁷ As negotiations progressed, the Herald explained that although the coalition scheme was looking brighter, it might be delayed.

Laurier is willing but is being bitterly opposed by Pugsley, Lemieux, Oliver, and Macdonald--Carvell, Graham and Pardee are in favor of Sir Robert Borden's

³⁴ Bulletin (Edmonton), February 1, 1917, p. 7.

³⁵ Herald, May 4, 1917, p. 6.

³⁶ Ibid., June 2, 1917, p. 5.

³⁷ Albertan (Calgary), June 2, 1917, p. 1; Bulletin (Edmonton), June 3, 1917, p. 1.

proposal.³⁸

It was the Herald which had a few days earlier declared that Laurier was against coalition.³⁹ Most of the press reports concerning coalition in the first week of June were based on the Ottawa rumour mill and often led papers to add their own speculative thoughts. The failure of the coalition negotiations⁴⁰ was noted in the Alberta press, and the Herald felt that the failure would result in a split in the Liberal party and that while the Dominion Cabinet would be reorganized on purely party lines, the conscriptionist wing of the party would support the government on war measures.⁴¹

On June 8, the Edmonton Bulletin noted the failure of the first efforts of Borden to obtain a coalition government and on June 9 noted the beginning of the next stage in the negotiations.⁴² It reported rumours that Borden was trying to induce individual Liberals who favoured conscription to his government.⁴³ The Bulletin did not feel obligated to change its opinion about Sir Robert Borden over the

³⁸ Calgary Herald, June 4, 1917, p. 1.

³⁹ Ibid., June 1, 1917, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Ramsay Cook noted that conscription made coalition impossible for Laurier. If he joined, Laurier would lose Quebec to the nationalists. His refusal alienated most pro-conscriptionist Liberals and made the formation of a coalition government inevitable. Ramsay Cook, The Politics of John Diefenbaker and the Free Press (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 76. Also see Barbara Robertson, Wilfrid Laurier: The Great Conciliator (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 143-44.

⁴¹ Calgary Herald, June 9, 1917, p. 1.

⁴² Bulletin, June 8, 1917, p. 7.

⁴³ Ibid., June 9, 1917, p. 1.

coalition issue:

If Sir Robert Borden has not been able to direct one government in such a way that it can get the approval of the public to so vital a measure as conscription, what hope is there that he would be able to direct another government any better?⁴⁴

The Bulletin then called for his resignation.

It should be apaprent [sic] to Sir Robert Borden that, with the results of his leadership so painfully in evidence, the highest service he can render his country is to resign.⁴⁵

On June 12, the Bulletin momentarily softened its stand on coalition in an editorial. The Bulletin declared its support for conscription and admitted that coalition was necessary to introduce conscription and even went so far as to admit that the leader must come from the "Conservative-Nationalist" section as it was the largest, but denied Borden's right to lead because of his "blunders."⁴⁶

So long as the Borden government could go ahead, go backwards, or go sideways, every suggestion to follow the British precedent and form a coalition Government in Canada was met by rejection and ridicule from Sir Robert and every other spokesman for the present ministry down to the Edmonton Journal. Only when the Government got stuck up to the ears in difficulties of its own making, when it could neither go forward to conscription, nor backwards to voluntary enlistment, nor sideways to inaction did Sir Robert begin to call upon the Liberals to come in and pull him out of his predicament.

Coalition to manage the war Sir Robert would have nothing to do with. Coalition to extricate his Government from the consequences of its own mismanagement of the war is what he has been appealing for. The only proper beginning for a coalition under those circumstances is the resignation of the Premier whose incompetence has brought both the country's war effort and the Government to a standstill.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 7. ⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., June 12, 1917, p. 7. ⁴⁷Ibid.

Reaction from the Edmonton Journal was immediate.

"Canada ought to have compulsory service" declares the Edmonton Bulletin and in the same article demands that the premier who has had the courage to adopt a policy of compulsory service should "go and go now". If he did, his place would be taken by a man who is fighting compulsory service. Will someone please explain how the course of compulsory service would be aided if the Bulletin had its way. We cannot.⁴⁸

One of the first of the prairie dailies to advocate national government in a concerted campaign was the Saskatoon Star. This Liberal daily was followed by the Alberta press with interest and even forced a reaction from some of the weekly press in Alberta.

The Saskatoon Star has had a vision of a National Government at Ottawa, neither Liberal nor Conservative, and above party politics altogether in order to unify the country and bring it whole-heartedly to support the extreme exigencies [sic] which the war has forced upon us. The Star thinks that something bigger than a coalition of party leaders is necessary now. Is it possible to find enough big men in Canada to meet such a crisis, men who are not and have not been hide-bound partisans? We would like to see their names in print.⁴⁹

The attitude of the Liberal papers on conscription made coalition attractive to them as a means of gaining acceptance of conscription. Coalition was rapidly being advocated by more and more of the Liberal papers. Even the Calgary Herald in a front page editorial gave "A tribute to Liberals:"⁵⁰

As one who opposed and does oppose the Liberal party, the Herald salutes both the Liberal members and the Liberal newspapers that have placed duty before the party, and assures them that they may depend upon

⁴⁸ Journal, June 12, 1917, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Bawlf Sun, June 15, 1917, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Herald, June 23, 1917, p. 1.

the loyal co-operation of their fellow citizens of Conservative Conviction.⁵¹

The question of coalition as well as conscription had become questions of patriotism for the Canadian people. After noting that the Toronto Globe and the Manitoba Free Press and other leading Liberal newspapers were in favour of conscription, the Red Deer News, traditionally Conservative, appealed for support for a union government.

The only way to avert serious trouble is for the English speaking Liberals in Parliament to join Sir Robert Borden in a union government. Laurier stands in the way. Will Ontario and Western Liberals be controlled by personal friendship for their leader or by patriotism? It is the day of decision. The Globe points out the path of duty. The country is awaiting the issue.⁵²

The Red Deer Liberal paper, the Advocate, gave its support to national government and made an impassioned plea to "fulfil Canada's share in the War."⁵³ The Liberals would

. . . welcome to this end some measure of coalition; that failing, a great number of Western Liberals at least will support the Liberal members who have supported conscription--the only adequate and scientific method for a democracy to raise its quota in war--or will support candidates of a Government pledged to carry out conscription despite its many weaknesses. The Liberals are between the devil and the deep sea but the Advocate sees only one way ahead for many of us leaving "after the war" to deal with the calling to account of any who have betrayed their trust during the war.⁵⁴

During the month of July conscription remained the most contentious issue with coalition receiving some attention in Alberta papers. The discussions centered around the positions taken by other

⁵¹Ibid. ⁵²News, June 27, 1917, p. 4.

⁵³Advocate, July 20, p. 4. ⁵⁴Ibid.

newspapers on the issue. For example, the Edmonton Journal took the Albertan to task:

Some Liberal newspapers are making an extraordinary effort to make it appear that the divisions in the party are of a transient nature, the Calgary Albertan, for instance praises in one breath Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mr. Oliver, Mr. Clark, and Mr. Buchanan. But everyone who is not blinded by mere party zeal must recognize that they cannot all be worthy of commendation. To praise the two latter for the stand they have taken at Ottawa must be to condemn the two former and vice versa.⁵⁵

After declaring that there was "a serious duty resting upon every public individual and public newspaper today to be as fair as possible to those with whom he is not usually in agreement,"⁵⁶ the Herald hastened to point out the shortcomings of the Albertan in this matter.

The Herald considers that the Morning Albertan is not "playing the game" in these respects. It is displaying a spirit more narrow than that of almost any English Liberal newspaper in the Dominion, apart possibly from the Edmonton Bulletin, which always "takes the cake" for political narrowness. The Herald believes that the Albertan would serve its duty to the country better if it would for once come out of its thick shell of partyism and give an open opinion on political matters.⁵⁷

The Edmonton Bulletin noted the Herald's advice:

The Calgary Herald appeals to Liberal papers to "be generous" in their criticism of the Borden Government. The advice comes from about the most inappropriate quarter possible, and is in itself about as inappropriate as anything that could be suggested from any quarter. The newspapers opposed to the Borden Government have treated that Government since the war broke out with a degree of forbearance such as no previous Canadian Government ever received--or was

⁵⁵ Journal, July 12, 1917, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Calgary Herald, July 14, 1917, p. 6. ⁵⁷ Ibid.

entitled to receive.⁵⁸

Although the majority of the Alberta Liberal weekly press supported conscription, they refrained from committing themselves on the coalition issue. The provincial Liberal press was free in its criticism of the Borden government. A few of the Liberal weeklies tended to favour coalition even though some of these papers were staunch supporters of Oliver and the Bulletin. The Camrose Canadian thought national government possible and called on Borden to resign and call an election--it felt that the present government could not be relied upon to enforce conscription.⁵⁹ In this, as in most political matters, the Canadian reflected the opinion of Oliver's Bulletin. Another supporter of Oliver, the Stettler Independent, went further and declared

. . . that party politics conducted for the sake of a party advantage in Dominion affairs during war time is a crime against the state, and against the soldiers who are representing the country at the front.

One of the pathetic phases of partisanship at present is that there does not seem to be enough power residing in parliament to put some of the agitators in Quebec against conscription behind bars. It is one thing to sing God save the King in parliament and another to let demagogues like Lavergne and Marcil speak and act as though the King did not exist.⁶⁰

Another weekly paper, the Fort Saskatchewan Conservator, called upon history to support the movement for a coalition government.

⁵⁸Bulletin, July 20, 1917, p. 7.

⁵⁹Canadian, July 19, 1917, p. 4; July 26, 1917, p. 4.

⁶⁰Independent, July 19, 1917, p. 3.

Such a form of Government has in the past been adopted in Canada itself. At a time when there was a good deal of agitation against Confederation Sir John MacConald [sic] and Hon. George Brown--personally incompatible and politically enemies--joined hands along with certain of their followers until the British North American Act became law and was placed in actual operation.⁶¹

Following the passage of the Military Services Bill through the House of Commons, the western papers began to consider the forthcoming Western Liberal Convention at Winnipeg. After the success of the Toronto meeting which had supported Laurier, interest in the position to be taken by western Liberals quickened. The Ontario Liberals proposed a campaign in which winning of the war would be the first consideration and declared,

. . . that under Sir W. Laurier's leadership the next campaign would be fought and won, and there would be no extension of the Parliamentary term, that Coalition with the Borden Government was impracticable and that there would be another voluntary effort before Conscription was enforced.⁶²

These aims appeared to have the full support of the Toronto convention although later rumours and reports indicated that not all Ontario Liberals were in favour of Laurier's leadership. Following the convention, the Ontario Liberal press declared itself in favour of conscription and offered its help to all Liberal candidates who would support conscription and the Military Service Bill in the next election.⁶³

Sir Robert Borden had continued to negotiate with leading Liberals during July and events seemed to indicate that a coalition

⁶¹Conservator, July 18, 1917, p. 4.

⁶²C. A. R., 1917, p. 566.

⁶³Albertan (Calgary), July 27, 1917, p. 1.

was possible.⁶⁴ As a considerable number of the conscriptionist Liberals were from the West, negotiations paused as Liberals prepared for a convention of western Liberals which was to be held in Winnipeg on August 7 and 8.

The convention was called by a group of western Members of Parliament who were in favour of conscription in the hope that they would be able to form "a definite political organization"⁶⁵ to pursue the idea of Union government. Credit for calling the convention is often given to Sir Clifford Sifton and while he was certainly in sympathy with the above objective of the convention, John Dafoe gave credit to other members of Parliament.⁶⁶ There can be, however, little doubt that Sifton was involved as he began his personal public campaign by writing an open letter, stating his support for Union government to Hewitt Bostock, leader of the Liberals in the Senate.⁶⁷

In Sifton's paper, the Manitoba Free Press, an impressive campaign in favour of national government and written by John Dafoe appeared in the editorial columns. Sifton carried this campaign to the people by launching on a personal tour of the west. As Sifton proceeded in his western tour, he noted that the situation was not as favourable as he had hoped. Although he found support for his position, Sifton found that the delegates who were chosen for the convention were

⁶⁴H. Borden, ed., Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1938), II, pp. 733-34.

⁶⁵John W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to his Times (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1931), p. 418.

⁶⁶Ibid. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 412.

not in sympathy with the movement for conscription and coalition.⁶⁸

The party organization retained control of the selection of representatives and delegates and these were selected with the party interests in mind.

Sir Clifford's intervention into western affairs did little to further his cause. Western leaders resented the intervention of an individual they regarded as the embodiment of the eastern "big interests."⁶⁹ They had not forgiven Sifton's desertion of the Liberal party or his opposition to reciprocity in 1911. The Albertan thought that Sir Clifford had not given an honest assessment of conditions in Canada and noted the lack of any call for conscription of wealth among Sir Clifford's declarations.⁷⁰ The Albertan took note of the influence that Sir Clifford was exerting on several Calgary Liberals. His support for Union government and conscription was enough reason for these Liberals to oppose it.

He is to Western Liberals what the red flag is to the bull. He betrayed the party on a basic principle of Liberalism.

He supports Union government and conscription so they oppose it.⁷¹

The Edmonton Bulletin was even more skeptical of Sir Clifford's support and in an editorial entitled "Win the War and Slam Quebec," the Bulletin noted that "big business"⁷² had captured Canada

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 414.

⁶⁹ Arthur R. Ford, "Some Notes on the Formation of the Union Government in 1917," Canadian Historical Review, XIX, No. 4, (December, 1938), 360-1.

⁷⁰ Albertan (Calgary), July 26, 1917, p. 3.

⁷¹ Ibid., August 2, 1917, p. 3.

⁷² Bulletin, August 1, 1917, p. 7.

in 1911 and that they had won because of the treachery of professed Liberals. Big business had opened its campaign in 1917 with the help of like treachery, suggested the Bulletin. Its purpose was "to set race against race and province against province."⁷³

The situation in Calgary, however, provided the best example of the position of Alberta Liberals prior to the Winnipeg convention. The reaction of individual Liberals to Sifton's campaign was described as unfortunate by the Albertan. "The future of the country is of much more importance than the expression of animosity to a man who does not deserve well of his party."⁷⁴ The Albertan was indeed involved in Liberal politics. The editor of the Albertan, W. M. Davidson, was a member of the Alberta Legislature for Calgary North.⁷⁵ His wife was nominated as a delegate to the Winnipeg convention at a meeting held in Calgary on the first of August.⁷⁶ She refused the nomination on the grounds that she had not made up her mind about Sir Wilfrid and the conscription issue. Her husband, however, was convinced of the propriety of his own position and encouraged the meeting to adopt a pro-conscription attitude. This course of action was rejected. Davidson then requested that the delegates should not be instructed and therefore allowed maximum freedom at the convention. In this he succeeded, but most of the delegates from Calgary, as those from the rest of Alberta, were pro-Laurier and if not openly anti-conscriptionist, they would not adopt a position which would split the

⁷³Ibid. ⁷⁴Albertan (Calgary), August 2, 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁵Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1917, p. 456.

⁷⁶Albertan (Calgary), August 2, 1917, p. 3.

party or alienate Laurier.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Albertan remained "hopeful" and expressed the opinion that "the object of the convention is to have no test of strength between two parties but to arrive at some settlement satisfactory to all parties."⁷⁸

On the morning of the convention some of the Liberal press in Alberta, notably the Bulletin, reported that all was well, but not all of the pro-Liberal papers were convinced.⁷⁹ For example, under the heading "It looks Dark" the Albertan declared:

Things do not look good for Canada in Winnipeg today. Alberta which has sacrificed more men than almost any other province is leading the fight against those who wish to unite the country on conscription for the purpose of winning the war. All the political strategy of old Liberal campaigners is brought to bear in favor of Laurier and a party contest instead of union and a national government. It is a great pity: and a cause for regret and even shame to those in this province who have given up so much and are willing to give up more on behalf of Canada.⁸⁰

About 1000 delegates were present when the convention opened on August 7. The business of the first day did not directly involve the issue of conscription but the general negative attitude toward it was discernible and Dr. Michael Clark, disappointed at the anti-conscriptionist attitude of the convention, left for home. Although conscription itself was not mentioned, the attitude of the convention to the Borden administration was set forth in the first resolution. The Convention declared "its most severe disapproval of the War

⁷⁷Ibid. ⁷⁸Ibid., August 6, 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), August 7, 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁰Albertan (Calgary), August 7, 1917, p. 7.

administration of the Borden Government."⁸¹ It charged the Government with "gross incompetence and inefficiency" and declared that the Government had attempted from the beginning to make a "national life and death struggle the prerogative of one political party."⁸² One of the crucial items of business was the "Win-the-War resolution" moved by D. B. Neely, M.P. from Saskatchewan.⁸³ This resolution contained a clause which advocated "the maintenance, in unimpaired strength at the Front, of our fighting forces, and the taking of all steps necessary to secure required forces for this purpose."⁸⁴

To this clause J. G. Turriff moved an amendment which would add the words "and by compulsion if possible."⁸⁵ This amendment was rejected by a substantial majority after Premier Arthur Sifton and Honourable T. H. Johnson insisted that the idea of conscription was implicit in the resolution as it stood. Although part of the Manitoba delegation favoured the amendment, it was defeated and unanimous assent was given to the resolution.⁸⁶

The resolution made no mention of coalition; however, Mr. Neely did describe Sir Robert Borden's proposal of coalition as an insult to the opposition leader and declared that under a Liberal administration reinforcements would be kept up at the front. The

⁸¹C. A. R., 1917, p. 573. ⁸²Ibid.

⁸³This resolution was written by John Dafoe. Cook, Dafoe and the Free Press, p. 79.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵C. A. R., 1917, p. 574. The Review uses the phrase "and by compulsion if possible." The Alberta press reported it as "and by conscription if necessary."

⁸⁶C. A. R., 1917, p. 574.

anti-government attitude of the convention was based on the government's administration of the war. The party organizers managed to keep discussion of conscription and coalition off the floor although it has been suggested that negotiations in the backrooms were far from uncomplicated by these issues.

On the following day the Winnipeg convention adopted another important resolution in which it endorsed Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The motion stated:

That the Convention places on record its admiration of the life and work of the greatest of all Canadians, the Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and of his earnest endeavour to carry out his duty as he sees it in the interest of all Canada respecting our part in the great world struggle. We express the hope that his undoubted ability, his long experience and matchless statesmanship may be utilized in reuniting the people of Canada in this great crisis, in the successful prosecution of the War and in carrying out the platforms laid down by this Convention.⁸⁷

The Premiers of the four western provinces supported the resolution and the Premier of Manitoba, Honourable T. C. Norris, declared that:

I have been an advocate of National Government, and I believe the best chance we have of a National Government in Canada is under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. If Sir Wilfrid recognized that there was a united west desirous of a National Government he would be statesman enough not to ignore it. When Sir Wilfrid is returned to power--and Sir Robert Borden can never be returned--the thing to do is to form a national business Government.⁸⁸

Both of these resolutions were compromises and although apparently satisfactory to the party in the west, they did not achieve their purpose--to hold the Liberal party in the west together

⁸⁷Ibid. ⁸⁸Ibid.

under the leadership of Laurier. Although open dissension, with a few exceptions, did not occur at the convention, it materialized shortly thereafter. Discussions soon revealed that the only observation which the press agreed upon was that the convention had not accomplished what Sir Clifford Sifton had desired of it--the formation of a group supporting the movement toward union government.

The Alberta press remained in disagreement, as did the national press, over what had occurred at the Liberal Convention. The Edmonton Bulletin carried a headline which announced that to "Conscript Everything to Win War"⁸⁹ was the general conclusion of the Winnipeg convention, while the Edmonton Journal declared that the Western Liberals were behind Sir Wilfrid in their opposition to the conscription Act and pointed out that the Turriff amendment, asking for compulsion if necessary, was defeated by the convention.⁹⁰ Editorially, the Journal suggested that the only aim of the convention was political power and declared the statements of the convention to be "nebulous,"⁹¹ pointing out that Laurier was clearly anti-conscriptionist. The Calgary Herald explained its view as it answered the question, "What do the Liberals of the West propose?"⁹² in a front page editorial.

They say that they are out to win the war; they claim that they are in it with a whole heart: they promise to maintain our fighting forces in France.

⁸⁹ Bulletin, August 9, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁰ Journal, August 9, 1917, p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid., August 10, 1917, p. 4.

⁹² Herald, August 9, 1917, p. 1.

Yet they balk at the word "conscription" they confine their pledges to generalities and they propose to conduct their war policy under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. No one Liberal or Conservative, whose first desire is to win the war can logically support such a position. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is no leader for those to fight under who so desire and honest Liberals as well as honest Conservatives know it. Should the platform enunciated by the Winnipeg convention carry a general election under Laurier's leadership, Canada will be out of the war within six months.⁹³

The Herald also pointed out that the Liberals had missed a great opportunity.

Here is the opportunity of Sir Robert Borden--not to achieve victory for the Conservative party, not to satisfy those of his following who are as narrow in their political wisdom as the Liberal leaders at Winnipeg, but to unite under his own leadership the great mass of Canadians who care more for country than for party.⁹⁴

The Edmonton Bulletin noted that the Liberals approved of national government, supported Laurier, and endorsed conscription.⁹⁵ The Albertan saw the policy as a "Win the War Platform"⁹⁶ but clarified its position on the conscription issue.

The Albertan still believes that the time for voluntary enlistment is past. It is convinced that not 20,000 men can be secured by that method. The convention, however, was prepared to give that system another brief chance.⁹⁷

The Albertan disagreed with the Bulletin on the resolution concerning Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

It is no endorsement of the conscription policy of the Liberal leader. It pledges no one to his leadership. It is an appreciation of the services of the Liberal chieftain and an expression of the hope that he will adopt the policy of the party. If he accepts the policy

⁹³Ibid. ⁹⁴Ibid. ⁹⁵Bulletin, August 10, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁶Albertan (Calgary), August 13, 1917, p. 3. ⁹⁷Ibid.

he will continue to lead the western-Liberals. If returned to office, upon the failure of voluntary enlistment he does not resort to conscription, he will meet with the opposition of western Liberal members.⁹⁸

With regard to the other contentious resolution, the Win-the-War resolution, the Albertan issued the following editorial.

The Albertan's interpretation of the resolution is that the Liberal party is determined that Canada should use every means to win the war with conscription if the voluntary system fails, and there will be real conscription of wealth as well. The Liberals have no faith in the sincerity of Premier Borden's conscription policy nor in his ability to administer it successfully, and if returned they desire that Laurier should form a national government.⁹⁹

The Albertan continued to explain its position, noting that there was agreement among Liberals that the present government should be defeated, but whether its replacement should be a "national government or a Laurier government is a matter of opinion."¹⁰⁰ The Herald questioned the proposals of the Albertan:

Under whom, then does the Albertan propose to fight? Under a leader whom it claims it does not endorse, and who fights for a cause it does not support? What sort of hypocrisy is this that endeavors to deceive the people of the west in the interest of a Quebec leader, while at the same time trying to square itself with the people of the west by denying the Quebec Leader?¹⁰¹

The Edmonton Journal cast further doubt on the general support for Laurier while the Calgary Herald continued to accuse the Alberta Liberals of dominating the convention and refusing to allow the conscriptionists to have their say.¹⁰² The Medicine Hat News and the

⁹⁸Ibid. ⁹⁹Ibid. ¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Calgary Herald, August 14, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁰²Journal, August 15, 1917, p. 4; Herald, August 15, 1917, p. 6.

Lethbridge Herald agreed that the convention was in favour of conscription but only after another effort at voluntary enlistment had failed.¹⁰³ The News admitted that the convention was opposed to a referendum and consequently opposed to Sir Wilfrid's policy.¹⁰⁴ Although the News declared that the convention was for a non-partisan war administration led by a "strong man and free from all barnacles,"¹⁰⁵ it did not believe that divergence on one question would lead the Liberals to repudiate Sir Wilfrid. The "Liberal Convention concluded after declaring for National Government after Election,"¹⁰⁶ stated the News, while the Red Deer Advocate regretted "that the Convention was so decidedly against a bi-party or coalition government and was determined to run the election on party lines."¹⁰⁷

Discussions concerning the Winnipeg convention did not result in any sort of consensus among the press. They continued to express divergent views and eventually tired of the discussions as it became obvious that negotiations concerning Union government were being conducted outside of the formal channels of the Liberal party. The number of papers which looked favourably on this type of negotiation slowly increased. Nevertheless, the prolonged discussions about the Winnipeg convention caused the exasperated Edmonton Journal to

¹⁰³ News, August 16, 1917, p. 4; Lethbridge Herald, August 17, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Raymond Tanghe, Laurier, trans. by H. B. Myers (Montreal: Harvest House, 1966), p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ Medicine Hat News, August 16, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., August 17, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Advocate, August 17, 1917, p. 4.

ask: "Was there really a convention in Winnipeg?"¹⁰⁸ Its comment centered on the arguments presented by the Camrose Canadian in the discussion of whether Frank Oliver stood when the National Anthem was played. The Canadian stated:

The Edmonton Journal was especially interested in knowing whether or not the Hon. Frank Oliver stood. Several times 'the Journal' has returned to the matter, and finally in Monday's paper it copies from the 'Canadian Courier' direct testimony that Oliver did stand and thus prostituted the 'National Anthem' to that political use which he so much deplores.¹⁰⁹

The Canadian then declared that the National Anthem was not sung at that time.¹¹⁰ The Journal replied by referring to the number of Liberal journals which declared that it was.¹¹¹ The exasperation of the Journal put a final touch to the debate when it further declared:

The Canadian only needs to pluck up a little more courage in order to tell us that it is all a Tory lie that there was a Winnipeg convention at all. That it would like to believe that it was all a fairy tale or at least a disagreeable nightmare, and we can all well believe.¹¹²

Negotiations between Borden and individual Liberals continued throughout August. The negotiations with conscriptionist western Liberals was noted with interest in the Alberta press. As the western Liberals became convinced that Laurier was against conscription and would not support it, the conscriptionist Liberals began to

¹⁰⁸ Journal, September 4, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Camrose Canadian, quoted in the Edmonton Journal, September 4, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. ¹¹¹ Edmonton Journal, September 4, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹² Ibid.

openly advocate action outside of the Liberal party. The press increased their call for a non-party union to promote conscription.

The Albertan, in its campaign for such a union, suggested:

The ideal situation would be for Sir Wilfrid Laurier to announce himself in favor of conscription and declare for national government. The situation would then be much simplified. The Liberal leader has spoken in opposition to compulsory service, but not more positively than Sir Robert Borden. The premier without any notice and comparatively little consultation, decided in favor of conscription of men. He has done nothing respecting conscription of wealth. The majority of the Liberals in Western Canada will go into the election behind candidates pledged to conscription of men, conscription of resources and national government, with allegiance to no leader who does not endorse such a policy.

National government at this stage cannot be effected except by the elimination of both party leaders -- Sir Robert Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier.¹¹³

The Albertan's consistent opposition to Sir Robert Borden was in direct proportion to the Herald's support of Borden. The Herald saw Borden as the only man to link the two parties and declared that "Stories that Western Liberals insist on a new leader" were "absolutely wrong."¹¹⁴

Events of the next two months were to change the attitude of western Liberals. The first stumbling block was removed by the resignation of the Honourable Robert Rogers, Minister of Public Works, on August 17, 1917. His removal had been advocated by most of the Alberta dailies and even the Calgary Herald regarded the announcement of his resignation as a "cause for satisfaction."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Albertan (Calgary), August 22, 1917, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Calgary Herald, August 22, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., August 21, 1917, p. 6.

The conscriptionist Liberals were not happy with the direction assumed by the leadership of the Liberal party following the Winnipeg convention and immediately set about rectifying the situation. Public meetings were held in Winnipeg where dissatisfaction was at its peak. The North Winnipeg Liberals declared in favour of a "National Government" on August 17. This was followed by a meeting of two thousand South Winnipeg Liberals on August 21. They expressed their approval of conscription and repudiated the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. They approved of national government, preferably under new leadership.

At this meeting, Mr. Premier Norris expressed himself as being opposed to Laurier leadership under present conditions and stated that his views put before the Resolutions Committee were in favor of a Western Liberal group pledged to no leader: "I have nothing more to say except that our leader having failed us, I am now ready to support Sir Robert Borden in the formation of a National Government."¹¹⁶

The "united front" which the Liberals had managed to fabricate at the first Winnipeg convention and the compromises that had been agreed upon had rapidly dissipated. Speculation in the press now centered around a meeting between western Liberals which was to be held at Ottawa on August 20. Among those expected to attend were:

Sir Clifford Sifton, his brother Hon. A. L. Sifton, Premier of Alberta; Hon. J. A. Calder, Minister of Public Works, Saskatchewan; H. W. Wood, President of the United Farmers of Alberta; T. A. Crerar, Winnipeg, President of the Grain Growers Grain Co.; and J. G. Turriff, M.P.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶C.A.R., 1917, p. 577. The Manitoba Premier repudiated his pro-Laurier stand of the western Liberal convention in order to hasten the creation of a pro-conscription national government.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 578.

At this point it was known that A. L. Sifton was in favour of a coalition government and on August 21 the Albertan carried a front page report on the Ottawa meeting, which noted that A. L. Sifton might join the National Government.¹¹⁸ Events in Ottawa were followed with some interest in the western press. They noted the return west of Calder, Sifton, Wood, and Crerar and their meeting in Winnipeg on August 23 with Premier Martin, Honourable C. A. Dunning and Honourable A. B. Hudson. Following this meeting, Henry Wise Wood announced his support of Union government but stated that he would not be a member of the government. A telegram was dispatched to Borden declaring the support of these western Liberals for Union government but insisting on a change of leadership.¹¹⁹ Calder, Sifton, and Crerar then returned to Ottawa to continue negotiations.

With the announcement that western Liberals were trying to oust Borden, the Calgary Herald voiced its anger. It took note of the meeting of caucus called for the following day and declared that, "unless the Western Liberals receded from their reported position, the movement for Union was dead."¹²⁰ Caucus met on the twenty-ninth. Borden outlined the problem and offered to step down, suggesting that Sir George Foster who headed the list of acceptable alternatives presented by the western Liberals might be the one to replace him.¹²¹

¹¹⁸Albertan (Calgary), August 21, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁹C. A. R., 1917, pp. 579-80.

¹²⁰Herald, August 28, 1917, p. 1.

¹²¹C. A. R., 1917, p. 580. The others suggested were: Honourable J. P. Duff, Sir William Mulock, Sir Fred Haultain and Sir Adam Beck.

Sir George Foster refused and gave his whole-hearted support to Borden. The caucus declared its loyalty to Borden and passed the following resolution.

We, the supporters of Sir Robert Borden's Government in the Parliament of Canada, record our emphatic approval of that Government's policy and achievements during these three years of war. We endorse the earnest and patient efforts of the Prime Minister to bring about a union of all the war forces of Canada and to give to this Dominion in these days of ever-increasing stress, suffering and peril, the advantage of an Administration which would typify that union and speak to the world the unswerving resolution of our people to see this war through to victory. For the purpose of such union we are one and all prepared to make any personal or party sacrifice that the occasion may demand. We record unanimously our profound admiration of the great work and splendid leadership of Sir Robert Borden. We sincerely believe that no other man can discharge with like capacity the tremendous task of Prime Minister during this crisis and that now, of all times, his continuance in the Premiership is indispensable to the nation and to his support we pledge our unalterable devotion.¹²²

On August 29 the Herald's headline proclaimed "Borden to Stay: Union may be off,"¹²³ but on the following day the Herald moderated its position. It declared that the matter of coalition was now in the hands of westerners. The Herald thought that conscriptionist Liberals would now agree to Borden as they had repudiated Laurier.¹²⁴ Other papers were skeptical. Although it noted the possible continuation of negotiations, the Albertan did not expect positive results:

¹²²C. A. R., 1917, pp. 580-81.

¹²³Calgary Herald, August 29, 1917, p. 1.

¹²⁴Ibid., August 30, 1917, p. 1.

Western Liberals may continue negotiations for Union government is the dispatch from Ottawa. It is doubtful if they will get anywhere. Whatever may be the words of the resolution passed by the Conservative members, the spirit is that they have no real desire for Union government, and Borden government is much more to their way of thinking.¹²⁵

The Edmonton Bulletin remained steadfast in its opposition to Borden and his government. Of Borden the Bulletin stated: "no Canadian Premier ever rated so low for administrative ability."¹²⁶ The Bulletin also rejected Borden's attempts at coalition. "Have you been offered a portfolio yet?"¹²⁷ asked the Bulletin in one of its unusual editorial acknowledgements of the negotiations for Union government. The leadership question seemed to have stalled, at least temporarily, negotiations for a Union government. The Albertan declared that "national government seems like a strange memory of the past. It doesn't seem to be talked about in polite society any more."¹²⁸

Notice was given by the government that they would introduce a franchise act and it was this issue which now received the largest amount of editorial space in Alberta newspapers. The Albertan declared:

The plan of restricting the franchise is as old as Toryism itself. To deprive of the franchise in the name of patriotism, citizens who have done no wrong, is the work of the Canadian Tory alone.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Albertan (Calgary), August 31, 1917, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Bulletin, September 1, 1917, p. 7. ¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Albertan (Calgary), September 4, 1917, p. 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid., September 5, 1917, p. 3.

The primary debate over the War-time Elections Act centered around the question whether the franchise was a right or a privilege. Others objected to the division of enemy aliens into two groups on the basis of their date of naturalization. Many politicians regarded the Act as a simple manipulation of the vote in the favour of the government.

As the Toronto Star, a strong win-the-war paper says, it smacks too much of Germany's treatment of its solemn pledge to Belgium. Why also should certain of the alien enemies be exempt from the penalties of the new franchise. It looks to us as though the Act was intended to deprive Western Canada of votes while it gave to Ontario people of alien birthplace the privilege of still voting. Is a German in Waterloo county, Ontario, any more loyal than a German in Alberta? If so, how does the government know, and if some Germans are friendly and some are not why limit the period of citizenship to 1902?¹³⁰

The degree to which the opportune introduction of the War-time Elections Act influenced the Liberal politicians to support Union government remains an open question. Nevertheless its electoral significance was apparent to the politicians and the vigorous parliamentary debate on the bill aroused strong party feeling.

On September 10 Borden declared: "It is both my purpose and my expectation to form a Union Government before the general election which is now imminent."¹³¹ Borden then stated that if it proved impossible to form a Union government before the general election, he would form one if he was returned to power.¹³² Other than reporting Borden's statement, the Alberta press gave little indication

¹³⁰ Lethbridge Herald, September 8, 1917, p. 4.

¹³¹ C. A. R., 1917, p. 7. ¹³² Ibid.

of further negotiations for a coalition government. On September 17 the Bulletin commented on Sir Robert Borden's efforts.

If the Borden Government had been national in fact there would be no call for a government national in name. The demand for the reorganization of the government on win-the-war lines is based on the admission that it had not been a win-the-war government.¹³³

Basing its opinion on the statements of A. L. Sifton, the Albertan reported that there would be no Union movement until the House prorogued.¹³⁴ The following day the Albertan expressed the view that if Borden was to have Union government, it would have to be formed before an election as one could not depend on his promises for the future.¹³⁵

On September 25 the Albertan noted that negotiations for Union government had resumed and described the situation as "perplexing."¹³⁶ On the twenty-eighth it was announced that Sifton, Calder, and Crerar had reconsidered their position and would join Union government. Calder, Carvell and others were at the capital on October 2.¹³⁷

The Calgary Herald of that date reported a rumour that Laurier was going to retire.¹³⁸ The following day the Edmonton Journal announced that, "Sir Wilfrid resigns as leader; will remain as

¹³³ Bulletin (Edmonton), September 17, 1917, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Albertan (Calgary), September 19, 1917, p. 1.

¹³⁵ Ibid. ¹³⁶ Ibid., September 25, 1917, p. 3.

¹³⁷ C. A. R., 1917, p. 582.

¹³⁸ Herald, October 2, 1917, p. 1.

Lieutenant."¹³⁹ The Calgary Herald still regarded the report as rumour, which was the correct interpretation.¹⁴⁰ The Conservative press suspected the Liberal party of planning some manoeuver. They noted the discussions at Sir Wilfrid's home and with what information they had available decided that the Liberals were going to play a "two headed game in election fight."¹⁴¹ They predicted an English pro-conscription man would lead the Liberal party and Laurier would be his first lieutenant, leading the French section of the party. Although the Albertan still found the situation "perplexing," it favoured the choice of Frank Carvell as the successor to Laurier if Laurier stepped down. It described Carvell as a "very able man, a strong debater, and a through-going Liberal, steeped in Liberal traditions and principles."¹⁴²

An announcement by A. L. Sifton in favour of a Union government was noted by the Albertan. "However," stated the Albertan, "that does not exactly mean that there will be union government."¹⁴³ Nevertheless, events at Ottawa indicated that there would be a union government. On October 3, Mr. Charles Ballantyne was appointed Minister of Public Works and on October 4 Mr. Hugh Guthrie was appointed Solicitor General.¹⁴⁴ It was the latter appointment which the Alberta press found it necessary to comment on. The

¹³⁹ Journal, October 3, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Herald, October 3, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Albertan (Calgary), October 4, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁴³ Ibid., October 3, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ The Solicitor-General was not appointed by the cabinet.

Albertan stated that Guthrie was not acceptable to western Canadians as he was a high tariff Liberal¹⁴⁵ and the Bulletin regarded him as a "Judas."¹⁴⁶ The Bulletin continued to insist that the only win-the-war platform was that drawn up by western Liberals at the Winnipeg convention and emphatically declared that "Laurier will not quit."¹⁴⁷

On October 5 the Herald reported that Laurier had asked for a delay of the Union conference and the following day reported that Premier Borden was moving ahead with his Cabinet making.¹⁴⁸ Noting the number of western men gathering at Ottawa, the Bulletin reported that Union government was "hovering on the brink."¹⁴⁹ These westerners included A. L. Sifton, J. A. Calder, T. A. Crerar, W. M. Martin, A. B. Hudson and Mr. Brewster, the Premier of British Columbia who was on his way east.¹⁵⁰ On October 8, Premier Borden held a conference with Sifton, Calder and Crerar.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, other influential Liberals met with Laurier in a last effort to prevent a rupture in the Liberal party. Mr. Rowell was also in Ottawa

¹⁴⁵Albertan (Calgary), October 5, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), October 5, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Calgary Herald, October 5, 1917, p. 1; October 6, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), October 8, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰C. A. R., 1917, p. 582.

¹⁵¹For an examination of T. A. Crerar's position on Union government, see Foster Griezic, "The Honourable Thomas Alexander Crerar: The Political Career of a Western Liberal Progressive in the 1920's," in The Twenties in Western Canada, Mercury Series, edited by S. M. Trofimenkoff (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, 1972), p. 109.

and his advocacy of the Unionist cause was well known.¹⁵²

While the Edmonton Bulletin denounced the western Canadian provincial governments for dealing with Borden,¹⁵³ the Albertan was not as adverse to the Premier joining a Union government.

According to the Winnipeg Free Press, which is fairly well informed about the movements of western Liberals, Hon. A. L. Sifton will be taken into the next government, whatever may come. That would mean that Alberta will have a new premier, and beyond a doubt he will be Hon. Charles Stewart, now Minister of Public Works.¹⁵⁴

This was certainly not the first mention of Honourable Charles Stewart as the successor to Honourable A. L. Sifton, and indeed an announcement was expected on Union government daily.¹⁵⁵ On October 9, Laurier visited Toronto and managed to reassert his leadership and control over a number of dissident Liberals.¹⁵⁶ The Regina Leader, which up to the last minute rigorously opposed Union government under Sir Robert Borden, was of the opinion that if Sir Wilfrid Laurier "should decide that the path of duty lay in stepping aside for an English speaking Liberal leader, then the Western Liberals would likely withdraw at once from the present negotiations."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² C. A. R., 1917, p. 582.

¹⁵³ Bulletin, October 8, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Albertan (Calgary), October 9, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Edmonton Journal, August 25, p. 1; Bulletin (Edmonton), October 9, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ C. A. R., 1917, p. 583.

¹⁵⁷ Leader, quoted in C. A. R., 1917, p. 583.

Negotiations in Ottawa were completed by October 12 and the Alberta press heralded the event with lead stories in all the major dailies in the province. The next day the daily press in Alberta carried the story of A. L. Sifton's resignation and the Calgary Herald announced that the Honourable Charles Stewart was the new premier of Alberta.¹⁵⁸

Most of the press welcomed the selection of Stewart as the new premier. The Edmonton Journal noted that the new premier was "a painstaking administrator"¹⁵⁹ who had little in common with the party machine and who had personally been only infrequently exposed to the many attacks on the Liberal government.

It is generally accepted that Mr. Stewart has been chosen for the premiership largely because he was a neutral in the struggle within the party. His position will not be an easy one and we can only hope, having the interests of the province in view, he will rise fully to his opportunities.¹⁶⁰

Generally speaking, the press also favoured the transfer of A. L. Sifton to the federal scene.¹⁶¹ The provincial Conservative press welcomed A. L. Sifton's support for Union government.

The Journal has done its full share in criticising Mr. Sifton in the past. But his action in joining hands with Sir Robert Borden in this emergency is such, so far as this paper is concerned, as to bring the statute of limitations into effect with regard to his record in the smaller field.

The ability that he brought to his duties as provincial premier could never be denied, however much one might find fault with the policies that he

¹⁵⁸Herald, October 13, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹Journal, October 15, 1917, p. 4. ¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Albertan (Calgary), October 15, 1917, p. 3; Bulletin (Edmonton), October 18, 1917, p. 7.

adopted. For that ability he will find plenty of scope at Ottawa and we shall be very much disappointed if in him Sir Robert does not find one of the most capable and loyal of his colleagues.¹⁶²

The provincial Conservatives also threw their weight behind the union movement. "I am behind the union government and every man in it,"¹⁶³ declared Mr. Michener, leader of the opposition in the Alberta Legislature.

While the Calgary Herald rose to the occasion, picturing Sir Robert Borden as the saviour of Canada in an editorial entitled "It is Finished,"¹⁶⁴ which announced that there would be no more party politics until the war ended, the Edmonton Bulletin was not so kind. In a two-column editorial it blasted Borden for his "wobbly leadership."¹⁶⁵ The Bulletin maintained that Borden was disqualified by his record and viewed the result sarcastically with the announcement that, "Big Business hold the fort."¹⁶⁶ The Albertan, a moderate Liberal daily, declared that the new government was a strong coalition government and that Liberals did have influence in the new government.¹⁶⁷ The Albertan felt that the government would greatly "strengthen its position among the people when it moves some plan for the effective conscription of wealth."¹⁶⁸

Union government was now a fact and since no further

¹⁶² Edmonton Journal, October 13, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Ibid. ¹⁶⁴ Herald, October 12, 1917, p. 6, ed.

¹⁶⁵ Bulletin, October 13, 1917, p. 7. ¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Albertan (Calgary), August 13, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., October 15, 1917, p. 3.

agitation for the formation of such a government was necessary, the campaign to form a government had become a campaign to win the election. In Alberta most of the daily press was satisfied with the new federal government. The leading exception was the Bulletin which declared that western prestige was not up in the new cabinet and that it was, in fact, an anti-union government.

. . . Mr. Mewburn and Mr. Ballantyne have no claim to represent the Liberal party on principles. The four recognized Liberals in the Government have therefore been strategically placed, so that while they will have to share responsibility for what the Government has done and will do. Sir Robert and his colleagues will continue to shape the government and to administer the patronage for the benefit of the Conservative party. Mr. Carvell, it seems, does not aspire to be numbered among the goats.¹⁶⁹

The Edmonton Journal reacted to the Bulletin's charge that the new government was a "manikin of Big Business" by examining a Bulletin editorial entitled "Big Business Wins."

Under this heading Hon. Frank Oliver's newspaper describes the different "big business" interests which it says are represented in the new Dominion government. One minister is a prominent manufacturer, another represents a manufacturing city, etc. Then follows this peculiarly interesting sentence: "The new minister of agriculture is the business head of the greatest grain handling concern in Canada and has been working in close touch with the Borden government for several years past."

So the co-operative companies of which the western farmers have made such a success are part of the 'big interests' which the Laurierites are out to fight and one of the counts against Sir Robert Borden is that he has kept in close touch with these companies. That the interests which they exist to serve are "big" there is no denying, but it is something new for a western paper to find fault with a government because they are given representation in its make-up.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), October 15, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁷⁰Edmonton Journal, October 16, 1917, p. 4.

Union government was favourably received by the Alberta weekly press except for the staunch followers of Oliver. The views of the moderate Liberal weeklies in the province were reflected in the columns of the Stettler Independent:

We believe that it is a real honest effort to combine the two old line parties for war purposes only. The policies of the Liberal party would appear to be quite safe in the hands of such men as ex-premier Sifton and Frank Carvell, the latter being given the department that was formerly presided over by the Hon. Robert Rogers. The last appointment shows in itself the good faith of Premier Borden and we believe that Borden has forgotten politics for the period of the war.¹⁷¹

The Hanna Herald promised its support for Union government¹⁷² and the Coleman Bulletin declared, "Canada's Union Government is one of the most notable of her achievements."¹⁷³ The majority of the weekly press were noncommittal at this point and remained so until, in the heat of the election campaign, they declared their support for or opposition to Union government.

The shift in political views in the daily press was noted by the Edmonton Journal.

So far as the Journal has been able to discover, there is only one daily newspaper in western Canada which is not supporting the union government. It is unnecessary to name it

Even the Regina Leader executes about the sharpest turn in the history of Canadian journalism and expresses its gratification with the result. The people of the west, it says, are overjoyed, 'because of the passing of the old Borden government'. But its Edmonton running-mate of such long standing declares that 'the Borden government under its new assumed name means the same

¹⁷¹ Independent, October 18, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷² Herald, October 25, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Bulletin, October 26, 1917, p. 4.

thing'. Even an old opponent like the Journal cannot forebear the shedding of a metaphorical tear over the loneliness to which its local contemporary is reduced. Must not Tom Moore's lines suggest themselves.

I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted
Whose lights are out, whose garlands fled
And all but me departed.¹⁷⁴

The Edmonton Bulletin may have felt somewhat isolated but never paused in its opposition to the Borden government. While the Edmonton Journal declared that "a new era for Canada has been inaugurated,"¹⁷⁵ the Bulletin found nothing new, other than an attempt to return to "the good old days."¹⁷⁶

The Borden Government during the first two years of the war was relieved of the restraint of parliamentary criticism. That period stands out in our history as the most disgraceful record of graft and incompetence the Canadian people were ever subjected to. The Liberal party will never be able to disassociate itself from the error made by its parliamentary representatives when they assumed that the way to get good government was to refrain from criticising the mistakes--and even overt acts of collusion on the part of the ministers. The plunderers who wish to restore the prosperity they enjoyed during the first two years of the war are to a man behind the present movement to again abolish the safeguard of parliamentary opposition and place all power in the hands of ministers.¹⁷⁷

On October 18 Borden outlined the policies of his administration in a list of twelve items chiefly related to the prosecution of the war.¹⁷⁸ This list, the Bulletin declared, simply reflected the

¹⁷⁴ Journal, October 17, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., October 19, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Bulletin (Edmonton), October 19, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ These items are listed in C.A.R., 1917, pp. 587-88.

failure of Borden's earlier administration to cope with these problems.¹⁷⁹ The Bulletin suggested the addition of another item to the list:

Item 13 is omitted from the list. It should be that the man responsible for this ghastly record of failure in face of a national and world crisis has as yet failed to tender his resignation.¹⁸⁰

Few newspapers offered any support for the Bulletin's position. The Grain Growers Guide noted the shift in the press and the increasing support for the Union government in English Canada.

All signs indicate that throughout English speaking Canada public opinion is rallying strongly to the support of the new union government. Only a very small proportion of the press remains antagonistic, together with a minority of the old hard shell party veterans.¹⁸¹

The Guide then proceeded to outline the attitude of organized farmers to Union government. Organized farmers:

. . . will give whole-hearted support so long as its actions and conduct warrant support. There are no better union government supporters than those candidates who stand upon the farmers platform. The best promise of harmony is to give the farmers candidates full support in those constituencies where they have already been nominated.¹⁸²

The Guide supported Union government as a means of furthering farmers' interests as well as the interest of the war. With the certain loss of Quebec to the Liberals in the forthcoming election, the west became a vital focal point for the new government's election campaign. The campaign and the promises which were made prior to the December election of 1917 served to illustrate the interest of the

¹⁷⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), October 20, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁸⁰Ibid. ¹⁸¹Guide, October 31, 1917, p. 5. ¹⁸²Ibid.

new government in the western vote. The campaign awakened the Alberta weekly press to the new political situation and forced them to reconsider their traditional views, whether political or non-political.

On October 31, 1917 Sir Robert Borden issued a statement declaring the new administration to be truly non-partisan and urged men of both parties, "in the various ridings, to unite and elect union candidates."¹⁸³ He also announced that elections would be held on December 17 with nominations on November 19 and the Yukon election on January 28, 1918.¹⁸⁴ The actual campaign had already begun; the struggle for the formation of the new administration had helped to plant the issues in the minds of Canadians. The winning of the war was the battle cry of both sides but they held diverging views as to how this should be accomplished. Although the Liberals tried to emphasize other issues as being more important, the Unionists, whose very formation was a pledge to implement conscription, declared that conscription was the central issue and fought the campaign on that basis. The federal election of 1917 therefore may be referred to as the 'conscription election' of 1917.

¹⁸³C. A. R., 1917, p. 588. ¹⁸⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE CONSCRIPTION ELECTION

The war had become a focal point in the lives of most Canadians. Canada had become a nation dedicated to providing large amounts of material and men to the war effort. Therefore most Canadians, especially those with relatives overseas, were concerned with the progress of the war. Similarly, an election conducted during the war would be fought on issues associated with the war and its conduct by the government of Canada. The national battle lines were clearly drawn between the forces of Liberalism and Unionism--only in Quebec were there to be serious efforts by third parties to disrupt this two-way battle. The Nationalists were extremely serious in their efforts to oppose the war and the conscription issue had forced many French-Canadians to revise their traditional political views and to at least support Bourassa in his vehement opposition to conscription.

Only a few days after the formation of the Union government the Premier had issued a statement of the principles and policy of the Unionists. "The Union Government," stated Premier Borden, "had been formed with a desire to give representation to all elements of the population supporting the purpose and effort of Canada in the War."¹ Noting that both political parties were represented in the Union government and that it was "intended forthwith to give Labour special representation,"² the Premier promised many changes.

¹ C. A. R., 1917, p. 587. ² Ibid.

The government's programme was centered around their first objective, "the vigorous prosecution of the war."³ In addition the government promised action against profiteering and promised increased taxes on excessive profits and income. The government also proposed greater co-operation with agriculture, promising a better understanding between East and West and immediately set out a Portfolio for Immigration and Colonization. This was well received by the press and, with a few exceptions, they praised the Unionists for their intentions.⁴

The announcement of the general election to be held on December 17, 1917 was issued on October 31, with nomination day set for November 19. The military voters in Canada were to vote the same day as the civilian population while the soldiers overseas would vote first, beginning on November 20. Membership in the new House of Commons was to be increased to two hundred thirty-four members from the two hundred twenty-one members who had sat in the last Parliament.

When he announced the election on October 31, Borden again stated that men in the government of both political stripes had "unselfishly stood aside in order that union might be achieved" and that "members of the present administration had sunk their party differences, disregarded all minor considerations, and united in an earnest effort for a supreme national purpose."⁵ He then urged the Canadian people to do likewise and to elect Union candidates. The actual election manifesto was issued on November 12, when the Premier reviewed

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid., p. 588.

the results of recruiting and the policy of conscription which had been adopted by his late government.⁶ The remainder of his statement was couched in the rhetoric of a politician in the throes of a general election.⁷

Sir Robert Borden, opening his campaign in Halifax on November 14, began his remarks by declaring that the "autocratic military aggression which now seeks to dominate the world" can only be defeated if people are willing to fight against it and "under the Military Service Act the highest duty of citizenship is demanded of the people."⁸ Borden declared that "the enforcement of military service should not be carried out by a Party Government," but by a Union government. The need for reinforcements is "insistent, compelling, imperative." He denied that there was time to wait until "Parliament is summoned, until a Bill for Referendum is passed and until the Referendum shall have been held"⁹ and the verdict of the people determined as the Liberals were suggesting.

On November 16 the Premier made a vigorous attack on Sir Wilfrid Laurier, accusing him of not giving his best assistance to recruiting in Canada and declaring that Laurier was responsible for forcing an election in war time.¹⁰ These accusations were refuted by Laurier who denied that he was invited to participate in recruiting in

⁶"Sir Robert Borden's Election Manifesto, November 11, 1917," in C. P. Stacey, ed., Historical Documents of Canada, Vol. V: The Arts of War and Peace, 1914-1945 (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1972), p. 68.

⁷C. A. R., 1917, pp. 589-90. ⁸Ibid., p. 590.

⁹Ibid., p. 591. ¹⁰Ibid.

the instances referred to by Borden.¹¹ Borden continued to press his charges and to explain his government's policy for the conduct of the war. In a speech given at Toronto on November 18 the Prime Minister explained the general policy of the new government and was particularly emphatic as to the enforcement of the Military Service Act. "We intend to see that in every community and every district and every Province of Canada, that Act shall be enforced fully, impartially and finally,"¹² declared Borden.

During his election tour the Premier addressed twenty-five meetings, with the war as the central topic and the need for reinforcements his central point.¹³ The Premier abandoned his campaign upon hearing of the great disaster at Halifax¹⁴ and apologized that he would not be able to go west during the campaign. He continued to make speeches in Ontario where he emphasized that his was a "no party government" and that its members were sitting "not as Liberals and Conservatives but as Canadians" and were pledged to "keep faith with their fallen comrades."¹⁵ Throughout these speeches the Premier made little reference to Quebec or, for that matter, to anything except the return of a government pledged to enforce conscription and carry on for Canada in the war.

The pro-conscriptionist attitude of the Unionists was

¹¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), November 23, 1917, p. 1.

¹² C. A. R., 1917, p. 591. ¹³ Ibid., p. 592.

¹⁴ On December 6, 1917 the Mont Blanc, a munitions ship, exploded in Halifax harbour destroying a considerable portion of that city.

¹⁵ C. A. R., 1917, p. 592.

clear; it was only the Liberals who refrained from taking a clear-cut stand on the issue. Laurier unquestionably occupied a very difficult position. His official position on the conscription issue seemed quite simple--he would accept conscription if the people accepted it in a referendum. This position was largely disregarded by the Conservative press who insisted that the Liberal party stood for no conscription. These accusations, designed to embarrass the Liberals, only partly succeeded since they allowed the Liberals to deny them in parts of the country while leaving these accusations virtually unopposed in other parts of the country--notably French Canada.

The Canadian Liberal Monthly for August 1917 defined Laurier's position.¹⁶ It declared that Canada should and would remain in the war to the end and that one more national effort to secure volunteers should be tried. If this failed, then a conscription referendum should be put to the people of Canada and the verdict would be accepted and enforced in all provinces of Canada. Until it was necessary and approved by the Canadian people, Laurier remained opposed to conscription declaring that:

. . . this sudden departure from the volunteer system was bound more to hinder than to help the war. In combating the policy of conscription all that I asked was that a measure of such moment should not be enforced by Parliament without an appeal to the people. I supported a referendum for the reason that the referendum is the most advanced and the most modern method of consultation of the people, without the complications inseparable from a general election.¹⁷

Laurier denied that the voluntary system had received a fair trial in Quebec and claimed that Quebec's slow enlistment was due

¹⁶Ibid., p. 598. ¹⁷Ibid.

to the "Borden government's alleged supporters, the Nationalists, whose policy was 'no participation in Imperial Wars'." ¹⁸ Laurier objected to the Military Service Act because it "conscripts human life only and that it does not attempt to conscript wealth, resources or the services of any persons other than those within the age limit, prescribed by the Military Service Act." ¹⁹

The reaction of the press to the Liberal manifesto was varied. The Regina Leader, while suggesting that it was a clear, logical statement of the political situation as Laurier viewed it, joined the Conservative press in criticizing Laurier for not meeting the pressing question, the immediate need for more men at the front. ²⁰ During his campaign Laurier emphasized his opposition to compulsion in Quebec and in Ontario; he insisted that he would not repeal the Military Service Act until the people had passed upon it in a referendum. Laurier made a successful tour of the West and while he admitted that Quebec had not done its duty in enlistment, he quickly laid the blame on the Conservative-Nationalist alliance. He claimed that "150,000 Canadians were in England as reserves and there was no hurry for reinforcements and no danger." ²¹ Laurier criticized the War-times Franchise Act as "iniquitous" and denied that Austrian and German settlers had any prejudice against Great Britain. ²²

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 599.

¹⁹ "Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Election Manifesto, November 4, 1917," in Stacy, Documents, p. 62.

²⁰ C.A.R., 1917, p. 600. ²¹ Ibid., p. 601.

²² Ibid.

Outside of Quebec the Liberals had a difficult fight to wage in this campaign. In Quebec the whole press was theirs except for two daily newspapers. In English Canada they had a united press against them with the exception of the London Advertiser, the Peterboro Times, the Edmonton Bulletin, the Calgary News-Telegram and a few smaller papers. The Premier of Quebec, Sir Lomer Gouin, was the only provincial premier behind Laurier.²³ The western Liberal governments were split in their support although the premiers were unquestionably behind the Unionist campaign. Although the soldier vote was undoubtedly Unionist, the Liberals looked to the vote of the French-Canadians and the remainder of the voters from other minority groups which had not been disfranchised by the War-time Elections Act. Labour-Liberal candidates were expected to make a good showing and the question of conscription of farmers left a lot of votes in doubt in the east as well as in western Canada.

The Alberta press fought an interesting election duel, covering not only conscription but all of the issues associated with the election. They discussed the Military Voters Act, the War-time Elections Act, the Unionist movement, the conduct of the war, the failure of recruiting, the failure of Quebec to pull her weight, the question of exemptions under the Military Service Act and several other issues related to the war. Nevertheless, the focal point of discussion was the Military Service Act and the compulsory military service it had enacted.

Although the Edmonton Bulletin would have preferred to

²³ Ibid.

avoid emphasizing conscription at this point, it was to be a conscription election. Since it had become the central target of a large portion of the Unionist press due to the lack of other opponents, the Bulletin was forced to wage a widespread battle as well as engage in its usual verbal battle with its traditional Conservative enemies in the provincial daily press--the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal. The other two Liberal dailies of some consequence in Alberta, the Calgary Albertan and the Lethbridge Herald slipped into the Unionist fold.

The situation among the small newspapers in Alberta was similar as the majority of these also joined the Union fold. Typical of these was the Granum News which outlined the extent of newspaper opposition to the Liberals in the following editorial:

The unanimity of the stand to Liberal newspapers throughout the country is more remarkable. When anyone tells you that you are being untrue to Liberalism by supporting the Union Government you can afford to smile when you know that the Government is also being supported by the Toronto Globe, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Toronto Star, the Halifax Chronicle, the Victoria Times, the Regina Leader, the Calgary Albertan, the Lethbridge Herald and practically every other newspaper of consequence in the country.²⁴

The Liberal party along with the traditional Liberal press in Alberta had split, forcing the remainder of the Liberal party to retrench. This resulted in some interesting changes. For example the editor of the Bulletin, Frank Oliver, found himself in alliance with the Attorney General of the province, C. W. Cross, the leader of a faction of the Liberal party which had previously opposed Oliver's meddling in provincial affairs. Other members of the provincial

²⁴News, November 30, 1917, p. 4.

Liberal caucus who openly identified with this group were the Honourable Duncan Marshal, Honourable Wilfrid Gariepy, Honourable John R. Boyle and the Honourable G. P. Smith. The new Premier, the Honourable Charles Stewart, however, was inclined toward Unionism but a large segment of the Liberal caucus in the Alberta House tended to follow Laurier or remained uncommitted. Nevertheless Unionist ranks were swelled by prominent Alberta Liberals, the most notable being the former premier, A. L. Sifton, who had joined the federal cabinet; Michael Cross from Red Deer; James Douglas of Strathcona; and W. A. Buchanan, the publisher and owner of the Lethbridge Herald.²⁵

Alex Allan, President of the Provincial Liberal Association, called a convention of Liberals opposed to the Borden government to meet in Edmonton on November 10. Over five hundred representatives attended and Martin Woolfe, S. G. Tobin, H. P. Atkins and W. A. Rae, all members of the Provincial Legislature, joined Oliver, McKay and Gariepy at this meeting. Ten resolutions were passed and those attending "unanimously approved the platform adopted by the Liberal Convention at Winnipeg."²⁶ It denounced the Borden government and condemned Sifton, Calder and Crerar for joining the Union government. The Honourable Frank Oliver spoke at length in support of Laurier and the convention passed a resolution of confidence in Laurier.²⁷ It also moved a resolution on the conscription of wealth as well

²⁵ Lewis G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 182.

²⁶ C.A.R., 1917, p. 626. ²⁷ Ibid.

as men which was a popular demand in the Canadian west.

We recognize that it is only by levying its fair contribution on the accumulated wealth of the country, the elimination of profiteering, the proper regulation of food prices to reduce the cost of living, and the rational utilization of the manpower of the nation, that Canada can hope to do her full share in the War.²⁸

The Liberals then dispersed to begin the election campaign in earnest.

As the battle lines had been forming since the creation of the Union government, the supporters and opponents of the Union movement had ample time to choose sides. Since the daily press in Alberta was largely Unionist, it was necessary to use the Edmonton Bulletin as the focal point of Liberal strength in the province. The battle between the Bulletin and the Unionist dailies in the province centered around the issues of the election. The Bulletin began its campaign with a not unusual editorial denouncing the Borden government²⁹ while the Calgary Herald carried a page one story which warned that Sir Wilfrid might repeal the Military Service Act if he was elected.³⁰ A Herald editorial was quick to point out that the government party was for conscription and for the forces. The Herald declared, "goodness knows how much longer surviving members of Canada's first contingent already at the front for more than three years" would be compelled to remain there "because of absence of reinforcements"³¹ and implied that only the Unionists would support

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), November 1, 1917, p. 1.

³⁰Herald, November 1, 1917, p. 1.

³¹Ibid., November 3, 1917, p. 1.

these forces.

The Bulletin's lead story on November 5 outlined Laurier's policy.³² In addition to outlining his position, Laurier accused the government of speaking in generalities and of sounding like the old Conservative platform of 1911--many measures of which were never introduced.³³ The Edmonton Journal stated that Sir Wilfrid's outstanding declaration meant that "soldiers must wait indefinitely for reinforcements if he is elected."³⁴ It offered support for this position by quoting a Canadian press release from the Ottawa Journal.

If Sir Wilfrid Laurier triumphs in the coming election, he will promptly suspend the operation of conscription, and, no matter how great may be the need no reinforcement will be sent to the front under the Military Service Act until on some undefined date in the future the country is given an opportunity to pass upon it by way of a referendum.³⁵

Following its explanation of Sir Wilfrid's manifesto on its front page, the Edmonton Journal carried the actual manifesto on page two.³⁶ The issue appeared very clear to the Journal. The only issue was "whether the boys at the front are helped or deserted."³⁷ Editorially, the Journal questioned Sir Wilfrid's sincerity. "How," asked the Journal, "can anyone read the returns from different Canadian centres of population of drafted men who are applying for exemption" and still believe that "voluntarism can possibly give the results that we require?"³⁸ For nearly a year "there has been no justification

³²Bulletin (Edmonton), November 5, 1917, p. 1.

³³Ibid. ³⁴Journal, November 5, 1917, p. 1.

³⁵Ibid. ³⁶Ibid., p. 2. ³⁷Ibid., p. 1. ³⁸Ibid., p. 4.

whatever for future faith in voluntarism."³⁹ The Calgary Herald's reaction to the Laurier manifesto was also plain. "Are the boys at the front to be reinforced at once or not? Laurier says no. Borden says yes."⁴⁰ The Herald suggested that only one conclusion could be reached--"that he is pledged to Quebec" and "we know" that "his Quebec following is opposed to active participation in the war."⁴¹

These two ideas, that Laurier was opposed to conscription and that Laurier was tied to Quebec, were to be hammered on unceasingly by the Conservative press during the election campaign. Every attempt was made to link Laurier with the anti-war effort in Quebec. The Edmonton Journal, for example, quoted from the speeches of Frank Oliver at a Laurier convention in Tofield. Oliver stated that "on the conscription question Sir Wilfrid Laurier has been one of the original advocates of it and was in favour of it still, if it were endorsed by the people."⁴² "This statement," suggested the Journal, "will surprise everybody--nowhere more than in the offices of Sir Wilfrid's personal organ Le Devoir."⁴³ The Journal in its editorial quoted Le Devoir.

"We are bound to repeat," it said a few weeks ago, "that conscription is completely banished in a form, under any pretext from the Liberal program. Sir Wilfrid has formally stated and repeated in the house that he is irrevocably opposed to compulsory service."⁴⁴

Hence, "there is not the slightest evidence to support what Mr. Oliver said at Tofield regarding Sir Wilfrid," declared the Journal, "and that

³⁹Ibid. ⁴⁰Herald, November 5, 1917, p. 1. ⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Journal, November 8, 1917, p. 4. ⁴³Ibid. ⁴⁴Ibid.

he would make such a statement simply shows to what a state of irresponsibility the former member of Edmonton has come. "⁴⁵ Oliver's paper, the Edmonton Bulletin, stood by his position in the face of this criticism and declared:

The issue of the election is not conscription. There will be conscription. There will be conscription under Laurier if the people want it. The issue is whether the people are to rule or not. ⁴⁶

The Bulletin was not the only Liberal daily in the province to receive criticism. The Calgary News-Telegram, the "new-found Laurier daily at Calgary,"⁴⁷ also received caustic comments from the Edmonton Journal. The News-Telegram had suggested that there were "eight or ten million eligible in the United States. Let Uncle Sam do his bit."⁴⁸ "Should our men in the field depend on American action?"⁴⁹ asked the Journal. "A more contemptible and dishonoring argument has never appeared in a Canadian newspaper outside of those directly under Mr. Bourassa's influence."⁵⁰ The Journal editorial also denounced those people who suggested that Borden was delaying in pushing forward with the Military Service Act. The work was "being pushed forward with all possible dispatch and no fair-minded or reasonable man would think of denying this."⁵¹ The Calgary Herald was only slightly more discreet in its criticism of Laurier.

⁴⁵Ibid. ⁴⁶Bulletin, November 10, 1917, p. 7.

⁴⁷Journal, November 3, 1917, p. 4.

⁴⁸Ibid., November 6, 1917, p. 4. ⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid. ⁵¹Ibid.

The Herald is not going to say Sir Wilfrid's heart is not in this war or the side of the Allies. We have had his word for it that he is. Judging by his record, however, it must be said that if his heart is really with the allies, that organ in him is so small as to require the services of a microscope to locate it.⁵²

The pro-Unionist weekly press was also critical of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy. The Stavely Advertiser, for example, declared that all of the volunteers had enlisted and "another appeal would be useless."⁵³ "Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy," declared the Advertiser, "means Canada's withdrawal from the war and desertion of her sons overseas and her allies in the fight for liberty."⁵⁴

For some Unionist papers, such as the Killam News, the direction of action was clear.

We want no back-sliding, no compromising, no vasculating measures now. We only have to die once and the name of the man who "rather be a live coward than a dead hero" is not emblazoned upon the immortal pages of history, but is placed along side of such traitors as Benedict Arnold who died without a friend, without a country and without a flag, and as the poet has said unwept, unhonored and unsung.⁵⁵

Not all of the weekly press were pro-Unionist and one of the most outspoken against the Unionist government was the Cardston Globe which declared, "there is a fight on in Canada today between the common people, on one hand, and a modern Canadian autocracy on the

⁵²Herald, November 12, 1917, p. 6.

⁵³Advertiser, November 23, 1917, p. 4.

⁵⁴Ibid., also see Stettler Independent, November 8, 1917, p. 4.

⁵⁵News, December 14, 1917, p. 8.

other."⁵⁶ The Globe declared that the battle was between "the People and the Big interest, and if the people are true to their country, the people will win."⁵⁷ The Globe supported Laurier in the matter of seeking a referendum since this was based on "the broad principle that in a democratic country it is the inherent right of the people to govern themselves as the majority may decide," and, emphasized the Globe, "providing there is no injustice to the minority."⁵⁸ "Laurier's position is strengthened," declared the Globe, by "the fact that over ninety percent of the young men eligible and registered under Sir Robert Borden's Act do not want to do military service at \$1.10 a day and do not propose to do it if they can by any means escape it."⁵⁹ The Globe stated that 206,000 out of 220,000 men registered were seeking exemption.

Surely there is some reason other than a desire to escape military service that prompts so many to claim exemption. The only cause that we can assign for such a condition of affairs is the fact that the government of Canada does not treat its soldiers fairly either in pay or pensions, and that, because of certain other incidents, the young men of Canada have no confidence in the government of Sir Robert Borden.⁶⁰

The issue of conscription was soon surrounded by other issues in the heat of the election campaigns. The Calgary Herald declared that there was a "reign of terror for Unionist candidates" in Quebec as "Laurierites threaten the life of a Union Candidate."⁶¹ Furthermore, the Herald stated that free speech was being stopped by

⁵⁶Globe, November 22, 1917, p. 1. ⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid. ⁵⁹Ibid., November 9, 1917, p. 1.

⁶⁰Ibid. ⁶¹Herald, November 26, 1917, p. 1.

organized gangs.⁶² "Which shall rule in Canada--French or English votes?"⁶³ asked the Herald. Certainly it was possible to draw on Canadian history to support a position such as this. The Herald did so in a front page editorial entitled "Bourassa is Boss."

Not since the eighties when Honore Mercier, Coursol and Laurier, using the scaffold of Louis Riel as a stepping stone to power, fanned the ashes of French racial bigotry into a living flame against English-speaking candidates, has there been witnessed such a spectacle of anti-British demagogues arousing the passion and prejudices of a people for party gain. And just as the old Rouge party became merged into Mercier's Parti Nationale, so today the old Liberal party of pre-war days has ceased to exist becoming part and parcel of the Nationalist anti-war propaganda, inspired and directed by Henri Bourassa.⁶⁴

It was the Herald's cohort, the Edmonton Journal, which explained the position of the Nationalists by suggesting that the Nationalists regarded the Liberal candidates as "less an evil than the ministry."⁶⁵ Le Devoir rationalised the actions of the Nationalists.

To bring out Nationalist candidates would be risking the success of the ministerial candidates while in supporting the opposition we are working to defeat the government which is urgent. If Laurier fails it will not be our fault.⁶⁶

Even in the carefully selected wording of its fellow Unionist daily, it would be impossible to go as far as the Herald suggested in interpreting the actions of the Nationalists. Nevertheless, in the heat of the election campaign, the Herald was using all of the devices at hand to win its point. If Laurier could be directly linked to not only the anti-conscription but also to the anti-war factions in Quebec, it would indeed be impressive political capital for the Unionists in English

⁶²Ibid. ⁶³Ibid. ⁶⁴Ibid., November 27, 1917, p. 1.

⁶⁵Journal, November 14, 1917, p. 1. ⁶⁶Ibid.

Canada. Since Bourassa declared for Laurier, then Laurier must be like Bourassa--'a traitor'.⁶⁷ The Bulletin regarded this so-called alliance as a plot of the Borden-Bourassa group to discredit Laurier.⁶⁸

Another Liberal paper, the Camrose Canadian, was not alarmed by "Bourassa's pretended support for Laurier,"⁶⁹ and declared its distrust of the Nationalists.

We know that Borden drew the Military Services Act to suit Bourassa in that it falls more lightly on Quebec than on any other province. We know that Borden is today playing a double game in Quebec as elsewhere, and we know that the only man in Canada who can unite the country in a supreme effort and secure a fair share of assistance from Quebec is the old Chief-tain, Sir Wilfrid Laurier.⁷⁰

The Bulletin suggested on November 21 that since the Military Service Act was an accomplished fact, a referendum could easily be held to determine the raising of future reinforcements.⁷¹ The Journal viewed this as a distinct shift in the position of Mr. Oliver.⁷² However, it was only an acceptance of the existing legislation as well as a rather astute political shift in the election campaign. The Journal pointed out that Oliver had regarded the Act as unfair while he later referred to it as "of no consequence in the present election"⁷³ and that it would be carried out no matter how people voted in

⁶⁷For a discussion of the relationship between Bourassa and Laurier see Casey Murrow, Henri Bourassa and French Canadian Nationalism (New Haven: Harvest House, 1968).

⁶⁸Bulletin (Edmonton), November 21, 1917, p. 7.

⁶⁹Canadian, December 11, 1917, p. 4. ⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Bulletin (Edmonton), November 21, 1917, p. 7.

⁷²Edmonton Journal, November 21, 1917, p. 4. ⁷³Ibid.

the election. This, stated the Journal, was an "attempt by Mr. Oliver to throw dust in the voters eyes,"⁷⁴ an attempt to make it appear as though the Military Service Act was no longer a political issue in the election. "It is the issue," declared the Journal. "If Laurier gets in, the Act is killed."⁷⁵

The issue of the Bulletin for the same date, November 21, carried the following choices on its front page:

Which is your Leader?

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| Laurier | or Borden |
| The people | or The Big Interests |
| The soldier | or The profiteers |
| The worker | or The trusts |
| The consumer | or The food manipulators |
| The taxpayer | or The pork barons |

Shall we have

| | |
|---|--|
| The people consulted | The people ignored |
| Cheaper food | or Higher tariff |
| Honesty | or Grafting |
| Economy | or Extravagance |
| Direct Purchasing | or Middlemen's profits |
| A united Canada | or A divided Canada |
| A people's Government | or A Millionaire's Government |
| A Government utilizing its national workshops for the state | or A Government leaving its national workshops to partizan supporters for private gain |
| A national Government | or A Union Government |

Shall we be under the flag of

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Liberty | or Bondage |
| Democracy | or Autocracy |
| Free People | or Organized Privilege ⁷⁶ |

Throughout the campaign the Bulletin hammered away at the Union government. "Coalition," suggested the Bulletin, "is another name for Clifford Sifton in camouflage."⁷⁷ Even the Winnipeg

⁷⁴Ibid. ⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), November 21, 1917, p. 1.

⁷⁷Ibid., November 2, 1917, p. 7.

Telegram admitted that the "supporters of the merger government will have to convince the people that the Unionist party is not dominated by capitalists and corporation influence."⁷⁸ The Bulletin paused to note Sir Clifford Sifton's denial of this influence.

Sir Clifford is explaining through the Winnipeg Free Press that Big Business has nothing to do with the formation of the Union Government. That will supply to the public any element of conclusiveness that may have been lacking in the argument that Sir Clifford and his friends thimble-rigged the coalition deal for purposes of their own. Sir Clifford's assurances on any matter effecting the exploitation of the public are to be taken at face value--in the opposite direction.⁷⁹

The move of many Liberals into the Unionist ranks was treated in a Bulletin editorial entitled "Where they Belong."⁸⁰ The schism in the Liberal party has freed Sir Wilfrid Laurier of "the presence of those who were Liberals on condition that the party ignore its principles."⁸¹ The Bulletin continued to point out that "the manifesto makes it plain beyond anybody's doubt where the profiteers will get off if Laurier is returned to power."⁸² Corruption in government was a constant theme in Bulletin editorials.

As to the election chances of the Liberals the Bulletin seemed confident, even to the point of carrying a cartoon showing the Borden government shipwrecked on a reef and bearing the caption "On the Rocks."⁸³ On November 20 the Bulletin declared that the "Dominion Wide Fight Starts Now" and that the Liberals "were facing

⁷⁸Ibid., November 12, 1917, p. 9.

⁷⁹Ibid., November 15, 1917, p. 7.

⁸⁰Ibid., November 17, 1917, p. 9. ⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid. ⁸³Ibid., November 12, 1917, p. 13.

government candidates in 95 percent of the constituencies in nine provinces."⁸⁴ The Unionists were also confident and announced that they would carry a large majority of the twelve seats in Alberta.⁸⁵ On November 24 the Bulletin took editorial note of one of its former companions, the Lethbridge Herald. The Herald had pointed out that "Union Government was created out of compromise."⁸⁶ "Exactly," stated the Bulletin, "the compromise of principle, public interests and national honor."⁸⁷

In the same issue the Bulletin carried a front page story which described an anti-conscription parade by farmers in Perth, Ontario.⁸⁸ One week later, on December 1, the Bulletin reported a request of the Manitoba Union of Municipalities for exemption for "farmers' sons doing work"⁸⁹ and offered its editorial support for this position.

Thousands of Canadian farmers, whose absence from the land will necessarily mean a smaller crop next season, are being conscripted for military service. The course is absolutely inconsistent with the declared requirements of the situation. If, as the Government says the world is on the verge of starvation, and must depend upon Canada and the United States to save it from that peril, is the danger met by withdrawing from Canadian farms thousands of men who have been doing their loyal best to keep up the food supply and whose places cannot be filled.⁹⁰

The Unionist government was quick to respond to this type of argument

⁸⁴Ibid., November 20, 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁵Calgary Herald, November 17, 1917, p. 6.

⁸⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), November 24, 1917, p. 9.

⁸⁷Ibid. ⁸⁸Ibid., p. 1. ⁸⁹Ibid., December 1, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁰Ibid., December 4, 1917, p. 9.

and issued a statement in Toronto on December 4. The statement was given out by Honourable N. W. Rowell, president of the Privy Council, and Major General Mewburn, Minister of Militia and Defence. The statement follows:

All farmers coming within class "A" called out for military service under the provisions of the Military Service Act who are actually employed on a farm in the production of food stuffs and whose services are necessary in farm work will be released from military service on condition that he continues to work on the farm in production of such food stuffs.⁹¹

The Bulletin called this move a "pure bluff, a delusion and a snare."⁹² The Bulletin accused the government of giving a false impression and declared that the "Military Service Act cannot be changed without action by parliament."⁹³ The Bulletin suggested that the Order in Council which pretended to change the military service law was "merely a memorandum expressing the opinion of the cabinet and authorizing the minister of agriculture to have somebody present to watch the tribunals."⁹⁴

The Calgary Herald, noting that a "Great Swing has started to Unionists," stated that farmers everywhere were "satisfied now with the Military Service Act."⁹⁵ Conscription, as a matter of fact, was intended "to help the labor problem among the farmers rather than injure it."⁹⁶ Two days later the Calgary Herald noted the support of H. W. Wood for "Tom" Crerar and declared that H. W. Wood had made it clear that the U. F. A. was behind the Union government and

⁹¹Ibid., December 5, 1917, p. 9.

⁹²Ibid., December 6, 1917, p. 9. ⁹³Ibid. ⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Herald, December 4, 1917, p. 1. ⁹⁶Ibid.

not following Laurier.⁹⁷

When President Wood of the United Farmers organization sent his telegram of endorsation to Honourable T. A. Crerar he delivered the rebuke direct to the campaign of misrepresentation being waged by James Weir, a vice president of the U.F.A. against the minister of agriculture in the Union government [Crerar].⁹⁸

The Edmonton Journal pointed out that now there could be no "doubt as to the position of those whose services are required for farming operations and have been refused exemption by the tribunals."⁹⁹ The Edmonton Bulletin, which had dismissed Crerar as "business head of one of the greatest grain handling concerns in Canada" and therefore part of the "Big Interests,"¹⁰⁰ did not refrain from expressing its doubts as to the processing of exemptions by the tribunals. The Bulletin declared that the districts north of the city were being depopulated by conscription of farmers and listed the number of exemptions refused in the Falher district at 40, Clyde 10 and Sturgeonville 10.¹⁰¹ The Bulletin also noted that the draft act made no provision for the exemption of farm hands, and again suggested that the whole procedure was not legal.¹⁰² "The hard fact is that Western farms are being stripped of labor," while "exemptions are being

⁹⁷ Ibid., December 6, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., December 8, 1917, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Journal, December 6, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., December 1, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 7, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁰² Ibid., December 11, 1917, p. 9.

granted wholesale"¹⁰³ in some of the large centres of population and munition works.

In a front page editorial the Calgary Herald denied that the "farmer is against the government because he opposes conscription and that he opposes conscription solely because he is afraid it might affect his own convenience on the farm."¹⁰⁴ "This is foolish talk," suggested the Herald and declared that it "believes that the farmer is patriotic and will support the war and the government."¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the Herald hastened to assure its readers that ranchers were exempt from military duty and referred to a letter from J. M. Carson, the Registrar for Alberta, to H. W. Wood asserting the same.¹⁰⁶

The Alberta weekly press was also concerned about this problem. "The farm help situation is the most serious problem affecting agriculture at the present time,"¹⁰⁷ declared the Wainwright Star. The Star along with other weeklies applauded the government's policy of "no man who is needed on the land will be taken from it"¹⁰⁸ and noted that the government had set up appeal bodies which would hear appeals on the decisions of the exemption tribunals. The Star recognized the need for controls and declared that these exemptions should be limited to those "who have been helping on the farm" and not those who "are simply using the fact that they are farmers' sons to escape

¹⁰³Ibid., December 10, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., December 11, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid. ¹⁰⁷Star, November 8, 1917, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., December 6, 1917, p. 4.

service."¹⁰⁹ The weekly press, which openly supported the Unionists, used this issue as an election plea. The Fort Saskatchewan Conservator declared that under the Military Service Act "no young man who is actually doing a man's work on the farm is expected to serve overseas."¹¹⁰ In the eyes of the Conservator the Military Service Act was the only point of difference between the supporters of Union government and the supporters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Therefore, "if you are in favor of having your country contribute intelligently, at once and until the end" of the war, you will "mark your ballot for the Unionist candidate,"¹¹¹ suggested the Conservator.

The settlement of the matter of exemptions for farmers had also won the approval of the Grain Growers Guide.¹¹² Although the Guide was not published in Alberta, it was widely read and when it negated its traditional western viewpoint in order to achieve unity for the purpose of conducting the war and announced its support for Union government, the Union campaign received the added support it needed to carry a significant part of the rural vote in western Canada.

The Bulletin also criticized the application of the Military Service Act and drew a comparison between the Quebec situation and the Alberta situation.¹¹³ It noted the appeal by thousands against the decisions of the Quebec Tribunals even though the rate of successful appeals for exemptions was 82 percent with about 3 percent being refused and the remaining cases pending.¹¹⁴ The Bulletin referred to

¹⁰⁹Ibid. ¹¹⁰Conservator, December 12, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹¹Ibid. ¹¹²Guide, December 12, 1917, p. 5.

¹¹³Bulletin (Edmonton), November 27, 1917, p. 1. ¹¹⁴Ibid.

the statement of the Honourable Arthur Meighen in the House of Commons: "The Military Service Act has been drafted to bear as lightly as possible on Quebec."¹¹⁵ The Journal asked the Bulletin to locate this in Hansard and then quoted the remark in context and outlined the other facts which Meighen pointed out--the agricultural nature of Quebec and the fact that French-Canadians marry earlier hence excluding them from the first category in the Military Service Act.¹¹⁶ The Journal insisted that the Act was applied the same in Quebec as in the rest of Canada.¹¹⁷ The Bulletin acknowledged Meighen's denial of this statement in an address in Winnipeg but did not withdraw its charge; rather the Bulletin referred its readers to "Hansard of June 21, 1917, page 2643."¹¹⁸

The Journal continued to examine the friendly relationship between Laurier and Bourassa and then pointed out that on the one hand the Laurier newspapers denounced "Unionist candidates for raising a racist cry to make political capital outside of Quebec" and on the other hand claimed that the Military Service Act was "too soft on Quebec."¹¹⁹ The objections of the Bulletin and other liberal papers and even the explicit denial of Sir Wilfrid Laurier¹²⁰ did not deter the Edmonton Journal from its position.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., November 26, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Edmonton Journal, November 27, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 10, 1917, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Edmonton Journal, November 28, 1917, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 4, 1917, p. 4.

The Journal has all along contended (and believes that it has made it quite clear) that the Laurier and Oliver policy, was, in its effect exactly the same as that of Bourassa, even though they tried by delusive phrases to make it appear otherwise. The fact that Bourassa is using all his influence to secure their return to power at Ottawa is the best evidence of this.¹²¹

This position was capitalized on by the Journal in the following editorial which was carried on December 8, 9 and 10, 1917.

Do you want to co-operate with these men?
 Henri Bourassa - has opposed Canadian participation from the start. 'If Laurier loses it will not be our fault.'
 Rudolphe Lemieux - chief Laurier Lieutenant in Quebec. 'We have no interest on the other side of the sea.' 'We have done enough.'
 Le Droit - only newspaper supporting Sir Wilfrid in Ottawa--does not see why Canadians died for a cause 'foreign to our own.'
 The writer of a Bulletin letter--'sacrifice already too great.'
 James Weir, M. L. A. --'Quebec is the brightest gem in the confederacy.'
 J. A. Ewart--Labored for years to split Canada and Britain--supports Laurier.
 Edmonton man--when applying for exemption (mother tongue German)--confirmed pacifist, 'war wholesale murder'--supports Laurier.¹²²

The Journal referred almost daily to the implications of this alliance on its editorial page--'No elector who really desires to see the Canadian divisions in France maintained in unimpaired strength can afford to line up on the same side as Henri Bourassa.'¹²³ The Bulletin's final pre-election reply to these charges against Bourassa only restated its earlier position. It denied any connection between Laurier and the

¹²¹ Journal, December 7, 1917, p. 4; December 11, 1917, p. 4.

¹²² Ibid., December 10, 1917, p. 4.

¹²³ Ibid., December 11, 1917, p. 4.

Nationalists and asked: "If, as the Government papers allege--quite truthfully--Mr. Bourassa is a traitor, why is he not in jail?"¹²⁴

The Calgary Herald had definite views concerning the election and its editor, J. H. Woods, published several editorials under the pen of Politicus in which he declared that Laurier would not support the men at the front and connected Laurier with Bourassa. Politicus declared that the only main issue of the election was conscription.¹²⁵

On December 1, the Calgary Herald suggested that the time had come to line up the parties.

Opposition

Liberal partizans who place party before country. Bourassa and his Nationalist following who want Canada to be taken out of the war.

Slackers and shirkers in Quebec and all other parts of the Dominion, who want to get back at the government which is forcing them to do their duty as 400,000 other Canadians have done theirs voluntarily.

The non-partizan party, which is opposed to Union government, and isn't quite sure about Laurier.

A section of the Labor party which is opposed to further contribution of men to the war cause. Practically the whole French Canadian press and a very few English papers.

Government

Liberal and Conservative men who have sunk party in order to more effectively prosecute the war cause.

A section of the Labor party which puts the war cause before everything else.

Canadian soldiers at the front.

Veterans of the war who have returned to Canada, and know better than all others the war need.

Female relatives of the soldiers who are anxious to see their men at the front properly safeguarded by reinforcements.

¹²⁴Bulletin (Edmonton), December 11, 1917.

¹²⁵Herald, December 7, 1917, p. 1.

The Grain Growers Organization of western Canada.

Fully nine-tenths of the English newspapers of Canada.¹²⁶

The inclusion of "female relatives of the soldiers who are anxious to see their men at the front properly safeguarded by reinforcements"¹²⁷ as government supporters indicated the anticipated effects of section 33 of the War-time Elections Act. This section permitted women with immediate relatives at the front to vote but did not extend the franchise to all women. This particular issue was strongly objected to in Parliament and in the press. The Bulletin suggested that the disfranchisement of women was a misinterpretation of the electoral law in five provinces where the women had gained the right to vote.¹²⁸ In the final throes of the election campaign the Bulletin noted that the government was insisting that "Canadian women cannot be trusted to wage war against" the German "monster."¹²⁹ The Grande Prairie Herald used even stronger language, referring to this limitation as "an outrage."¹³⁰ The Borden government "disfranchises the respectable women of these provinces and virtually tells them that only those who have relatives at the front are fit to vote."¹³¹ The government "classifies all the rest with the alien enemies of Canada." The disfranchised women of these five provinces "are now catalogued with the Moravians, Doukhobors, Bukowinians, and Ruthenians."¹³²

¹²⁶Ibid., December 1, 1917, p. 6. ¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Bulletin (Edmonton), December 3, 1917, p. 7.

¹²⁹Ibid., December 13, 1917, p. 3.

¹³⁰Herald, December 13, 1917, p. 1.

¹³¹Ibid. ¹³²Ibid.

The Herald continued:

The Union Government having bound and gagged thousands of electors of this country, men and loyal women alike, seeks to regain power and further Prussianize the country in the matter of franchise and suffrage. The Borden administration, in short, is attempting to reintroduce the notorious period of the family compact in our struggle for constitutional freedom.¹³³

Section 154 of the same Act, which outlined the reasons why voters were disqualified, received much greater consideration in the Alberta press. Of greatest concern were the subsections which disqualified enemy aliens and aliens whose language was that of an enemy and who were naturalized subsequent to the 31st day of March, 1902.¹³⁴

The subject of disfranchisement had been examined in the Alberta press frequently in 1917 as it had proved to be an issue of some interest in the Alberta provincial election in June of that year. The new Canadians brought in under the immigration efforts of a Liberal regime and provided with homesteads while the Liberals were in power were generally regarded as supporters of the Liberal cause. The results of earlier elections in the constituencies where these people had settled would tend to confirm this point of view.¹³⁵ The Liberals were criticized by the Conservatives for allowing these people to vote in the Alberta elections in June of 1917. The Bulletin defended the right of these people to vote so long as they obeyed the law.¹³⁶

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴War-time Elections Act, 1917, 7 & 8 George V, ch. 39, pp. 370-71.

¹³⁵Thomas, Liberal Party in Alberta, p. 28.

¹³⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), May 22, 1917, p. 7.

The removal of this right under the War-time Elections Act evoked the following comment from the Edmonton Bulletin:

There is now no ground left upon which to appeal to people of other than British descent. Because of their origin certain classes of our citizens, sworn to loyalty, are denied the privilege of sharing in the sacrifice imposed by a conscription measure. Again, because of their origin, certain classes of citizens, sworn to loyalty and convicted of no offence are deprived of their citizenship rights. What argument could be used to these people in a further appeal for voluntary contributions? We have, in effect, set them aside as people who have no part or let in either the duties or the privileges of citizenship. We have asserted that it is our war, but not theirs. We have by law proclaimed them unworthy of confidence and suspected of treachery. And we have declared to every naturalized citizen of Canada that what has been done to these others would under other conditions be done to him: that he has no inalienable right of citizenship, but only a privilege conceded to him at the pleasure of the Government.¹³⁷

Thus the naturalization certificate becomes "Canada's Scrap of Paper,"¹³⁸ suggested the Edmonton Bulletin.

An alien to whom a certificate of naturalization is granted shall within Canada be entitled to all political and other rights, power and privileges and be subject to all obligations to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject to within Canada. Section 17, Chapter 13, Dominion Statutes, 1881.¹³⁹

The Bulletin accused the Borden government of contravening the "principle that citizenship is a right and that Governments exist by consent of the governed," and establishing a distrust among tens of thousands of people for "Canadian citizenship" and thus hindering the growth of a "national spirit."¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, disfranchisement would assist in cutting off contributions to the patriotic fund and

¹³⁷Ibid., October 1, 1917, p. 7.

¹³⁸Ibid., October 2, 1917, p. 7. ¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., October 3, 1917, p. 7.

the announcement that "no more homesteads would be given to those who were not British subjects at the start of the war" caused the Bulletin to ask, "What of Americans? What is the portfolio of Colonization and Immigration for?"¹⁴¹

The Edmonton Journal outlined the position of the government papers on disfranchisement.

It has always seemed to us so obviously reasonable a measure of precaution to take when an election is held in time of war, that we could not believe that any wide measure of sympathy would be felt for these persons. [Since they] are not being asked to fight why should they object to voting privileges being removed?¹⁴²

The Journal referred to the "scrap of paper" charges of the Bulletin as sheer nonsense. "It has never been claimed hitherto that once a man has been allowed to vote he has a perpetual vote."¹⁴³ The Journal pointed to the disfranchisement of Japanese citizens in British Columbia and of Chinese citizens in Saskatchewan and asked why we have "heard nothing about these provinces treating the naturalization certificates of these citizens as 'scraps of paper'."¹⁴⁴

Discussion of the alien question was certainly not confined to the dailies. The Bulletin discussed a proposal of The Farm and Ranch Review of Calgary which suggested that:

The time has come for another form of conscription--the rounding up of all aliens exempt from overseas service to help shoulder the brunt of food production and have them placed on farms and ranches at a remuneration not to exceed that paid to our brave boys.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid., December 5, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁴² Journal, December 5, 1917, p. 4. ¹⁴³ Ibid. ¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 13, 1917, p. 9.

This, declared the Bulletin, only furthers the "development of the Prussian ideal in Canada. The war was not the fault of these citizens."¹⁴⁶

As the date of the election approached, discussions surrounding disfranchisement amounted to rather speculative accusations. The Bulletin noticed that a man who had lost his naturalization papers was disfranchised but not exempted from conscription. "The position of the Government is that he is good enough to be a soldier, but not good enough to be a voter."¹⁴⁷ The Bulletin suggested that "voters are not being allowed to vote unless their sentiments are favourable to the government."¹⁴⁸

Among the Alberta weekly press, the Consort Enterprise agreed with the Bulletin.

Before you vote be sure that your name is on the voting list. Of course if you are going to vote RIGHT you don't need to worry, your name will be written there but if you are doubtful accidents might happen. At this writing an accident like this has kept our name off the voting list. Of course we didn't come to Alberta until 1909 and I've only lived in this town continuously for a little over 2 years and in a list of 69 names people that stay in nights are liable to be missed, so of course we don't worry.¹⁴⁹

Expression of this type of sentiment was rare in the Alberta weekly press; those who disagreed with the government disfranchisement usually stated their opposition to the War-time Elections Act and then passed on to other matters. The majority of the

¹⁴⁶Ibid. ¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., December 3, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁴⁹Consort Enterprise, December 13, 1917, p. 1.

Alberta weekly press accepted the measure and viewed the issue as a balance. Since the aliens were exempted from service, "as a balance they are debarred [sic] from voting on war issues during the war time election."¹⁵⁰ Several of these weeklies suggested that enemy aliens agreed with the measure.¹⁵¹

The Edmonton Journal on the other hand used examples of disloyal behaviour to the best political advantage. It gave front page coverage to one Benjamin Hager, a student at the University of Alberta, who was a conscientious objector. Mr. Hager apparently insisted that "war is wholesale murder and to shoot fellow-beings on battlefield" would be a "moral perhaps evil crime."¹⁵² This story the Journal carried under the heading "Claims German as Mother Tongue--Lauds Laurier as his Leader then Appeals for Exemption to Court."¹⁵³

With the election approaching, both sides were caught up in a last minute election flurry. The Bulletin pointed to a "Unionist conspiracy to keep voters off the list"¹⁵⁴ and accused the government of interfering with the work of the enumerators.

It is current gossip on the street that some political workers for the Unionist party have instructed the enumerators to mail the lists to Honourable Frank Oliver at Ottawa in the expectation that they will not be returned until after the election.¹⁵⁵

The Bulletin carried several statements from men in

¹⁵⁰ Stavely Advertiser, November 9, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ High River Times, November 1, 1917, p. 2; Stavely Advertiser, November 9, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁵² Journal, December 7, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 5, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

the Canadian Expeditionary Force resenting the treatment they had received overseas.¹⁵⁶ The Bulletin continued to object to the conduct of the war by the "Borden" government.¹⁵⁷ The Journal declared that "the alleged deficiencies of the old Conservative government are not an issue in this campaign."¹⁵⁸ These charges by the Liberals were "utterly absurd," declared the Journal; after all, the "man who was the chief critic, Honourable Frank Carvell"¹⁵⁹ was now a member of the government. In the same issue, however, the Journal reacted to one of the Bulletin's editorial comments by reminding everyone that the Ross Rifle was "not adopted by Borden but by Laurier."¹⁶⁰

The Bulletin was constantly asking, "How would the Kaiser vote?"¹⁶¹ One of the rhetorical answers was, "For the Government that armed the Canadian troops with rifles that wouldn't shoot."¹⁶² The Bulletin continued to refer to the "shameful tactics" of the election organizers and accused them of "posing as Liberals on the phone to servicemen's wives."¹⁶³

On December 10 the Bulletin declared that "over 500 voters are omitted from West Edmonton Lists,"¹⁶⁴ and suggested that the only crime of those omitted was being suspected of being of Liberal sympathies. The Bulletin addressed itself to the consideration of

¹⁵⁶Ibid., December 7, 1917, p. 10. ¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Edmonton Journal, December 8, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹Ibid. ¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Bulletin (Edmonton), November 29, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁶²Ibid. ¹⁶³Ibid., December 8, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., December 10, 1917, p. 1.

election irregularities in Edmonton West as that was the constituency in which the editor of the Edmonton Bulletin, Frank Oliver, was standing for re-election.¹⁶⁵ The Bulletin announced on December 8 that an "immense audience" endorsed Oliver and gave appropriate coverage to "the inequalities of the Military Service Act" which were revealed at that meeting as well as the "incompetence of Borden Government."¹⁶⁶ The Bulletin charged that "desperate attempts were being made to steal the elections" and accused the Unionists of abandoning "all semblance of fair play."¹⁶⁷ It accused the government of using the War-time Elections Act in an illegal manner by classifying former Americans who were now Canadian citizens as foreigners if they were not naturalized before 1902.¹⁶⁸ The Bulletin appealed to these people to report to the nearest "Liberal committee rooms with their naturalization certificates."¹⁶⁹ It announced that "there is nothing surprising that enumerators have left voters off the voting lists in Edmonton East and West"¹⁷⁰ and declared that it was probably the same across Canada.

The Bulletin of December 14 charged that direct violations of the law had taken place "in twenty-one polls in the western part of the city."¹⁷¹ The instances of the "crooked work of Unionist agents and enumerators were multiplying,"¹⁷² insisted the Bulletin. The Bulletin also accused the Tories of "making panic calls to farmers

¹⁶⁵Ibid., December 8, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Ibid. ¹⁶⁸Ibid., December 4, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., December 13, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷¹Ibid., December 14, 1917, p. 3. ¹⁷²Ibid., p. 1.

whose sons have been conscripted" and notifying them that "it was all a mistake."¹⁷³

Even on election day the Bulletin announced "More Tory Frauds to Steal Elections."¹⁷⁴ It suggested that blank voting certificates were being issued in East Edmonton which allowed the holder to vote in any poll if he took an oath.¹⁷⁵ The Bulletin insisted that "no more conscription is now the Government's policy," and that the 100,000 men called up "exhausted the government's win the war policy."¹⁷⁶

Prior to election day, the Bulletin provided wide coverage of Laurier's tour of western Canada and announced a "western ovation for Sir Wilfrid."¹⁷⁷ Even in this context the Bulletin proceeded to explain how "Bordenism Protects the Big Interests" and offered the following comparison of amounts paid by "Interests" and "People" in Canada and Britain toward the support of government.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| In Canada people pay 94.5% | Interests pay 5.5% |
| In Great Britain people pay 39.1% | Interests pay 60.2% |

The Bulletin then concluded that "A vote for Union Government is a vote for the government of Canada by the Big Interests."¹⁷⁹

The Bulletin continued to criticize the government and declared that "if this is what 'non-party' government means in Canada the public are to be congratulated on not having experienced the

¹⁷³Ibid., December 13, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., December 17, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵Ibid. ¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., December 12, 1917, p. 1; December 13, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., December 12, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁷⁹Ibid.

'blessings' of merger government very often."¹⁸⁰ Both the Bulletin and the Conservative papers in the province claimed support from the soldiers at the front although the Bulletin conceded, in its criticism of the government's policy of disfranchisement, that the government was indeed limiting the electorate to those who supported the government's policy.¹⁸¹

The Bulletin carried a speech by K. C. Wade who had addressed a Liberal convention in Vancouver and who insisted that conscription was simply a brazen election cry and that the Conservatives had "no intention of having it in Canada."¹⁸² The Bulletin noted that there were "nearly 175,000 Canadians in reserve overseas,"¹⁸³ and tended to discount the claims by the Conservative press for the urgent provision of reinforcements.

The Edmonton Journal declared that the Canadian Fifth Division might have to be broken up due to a lack of reinforcements and denounced the Liberal's plan to use a referendum as this would delay reinforcements one year.¹⁸⁴ The Journal also insisted that "men of First Contingent cannot get furlough till reinforcements are given."¹⁸⁵ In this context the Bulletin again asked its rhetorical question, "How would the Kaiser vote?" This time the answer was "for the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 6, 1917, p. 9; Edmonton Journal, December 5, 1917, p. 1; Calgary Herald, December 15, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁸² Bulletin (Edmonton), December 5, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁸³ Ibid., December 7, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ Journal, November 29, 1917, p. 1. ¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Government which stopped recruiting in order to use conscription as an election cry."¹⁸⁶ The position of Laurier and the Liberals remained the same. They wanted a renewed effort at voluntary service and a national referendum on conscription. The Bulletin insisted that there would be "conscription under Laurier"¹⁸⁷ but with a referendum.

The Edmonton Journal objected to a statement in the Calgary News-Telegram, and attributed to the Edmonton Bulletin, that the general election result would have no effect on the raising of the first 100,000 men under the Military Service Act.¹⁸⁸ "This statement is as untrue as it is absurd,"¹⁸⁹ declared the Journal. Sir Wilfrid stated in his manifesto: "As for the present Military Service Act, my policy will be not to proceed further under its provisions until the people have an opportunity to pronounce upon it by way of a referendum."¹⁹⁰ Therefore "the whole election turns on whether these 100,000 men are to be raised or not,"¹⁹¹ declared the Journal. On December 8 the Calgary Herald supported this view and noted that the first draft of approximately 25,000 men was to be called on January 3--after the election.¹⁹²

The Calgary Albertan, a former supporter of Laurier, declared that Laurier's "policy is full of delay and danger."¹⁹³ Laurier

¹⁸⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), December 4, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., December 6, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁸⁸Edmonton Journal, December 3, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹Ibid. ¹⁹⁰Ibid. ¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Herald, December 8, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁹³Albertan, December 13, 1917, p. 3.

did not say what would happen "if the referendum declares for conscription."¹⁹⁴ "Laurier is opposed to conscription," declared the Albertan and the demand behind the Laurier party in Quebec and in most parts of Canada was a demand to "Let us get out of the war."¹⁹⁵ In the same editorial the Albertan condemned the Calgary News-Telegram for suggesting that Canadian troops should give way to American troops and return to Canada. "In other words the proposal of the Calgary News-Telegram and other opponents of the government is that Canada should quit."¹⁹⁶

This position was denied by the Bulletin which insisted that "Sir Wilfrid supports the war" and that "Canada would stay in the war to the finish."¹⁹⁷ The Bulletin outlined "how Borden wins the war" by outfitting "Canadian soldiers with boots they could not walk in, with equipment they could not wear and with rifles that failed when needed most."¹⁹⁸

The Alberta weekly press, while not engaged in the pre-election political struggle to the extent of their larger brethren, did adopt many of the anti-Laurier and anti-Borden attitudes of the larger dailies. Several of the papers avoided politics and either printed no election news or printed some news but offered no comment. However, there were a few papers which adopted different attitudes which are worthy of note. The Alberta Non-Partisan was not a Unionist paper

¹⁹⁴Ibid. ¹⁹⁵Ibid. ¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷Bulletin (Edmonton), December 6, 1917, p. 3;
December 15, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., December 15, 1917, p. 1.

nor an independent as its name might suggest; rather it was a paper which advocated the policies of the non-Partisans, a group of rising political importance in Alberta which was opposed to the traditional party system and which criticized both of the traditional parties.

The Union Government obviously does not mean a United Canada, and it does not stand for a business and democratic administration. Canada has never been more divided since Confederation The Union Government is a union of Tory Liberals and Tory Conservatives who have joined hands under a new banner to serve their masters (the big interests) more efficiently.

What Canada needs is a union of her people to overwhelm this last daring scheme of a capitalistic class who have eyes for nothing but profits. Canada must be united and partyism must be overthrown. But this can be accomplished only by voting for Non-partizan candidates such as stand in Bow River, McLeod, Victoria and East Calgary. A vote for these men will mean a vote for a United Canada and a democratic government.¹⁹⁹

While the Non-partisans were not to prove an important force in the federal election of 1917, it is important to note their existence as they were to assume an important role following the war.

One of the most outspoken of the weeklies was the Calgary Standard. Its editorial on December 15, 1917 illustrated the emotionalism and hysteria which surrounded this election and was directed specifically at the female voter:

This journal speaks with a full sense of the meaning and responsibility of its words when it asserts that Canada is face to face with a vast pro-German pacifist conspiracy to upset patriotic government in this country and to destroy its body and soul. To the sorrow of thousands of his former supporters, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, an aged and deluded man, has become the tool and figurehead of this conspiracy.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹Non-Partisan, November 23, 1917, p. 3.

²⁰⁰Standard, December 15, 1917, p. 2.

According to the Standard, we had a German conspiracy led by Laurier and directed by the "Hidden Hand" of the "predatory German Government." The "most important agency" of that conspiracy on Canadian soil, declared the Standard, "is the Roman Catholic Church."²⁰¹

The Vatican presented a spectacle of supine cowardice when Catholic Belgium was ruined. It feared Germany too much to effectively protest when Belgian men were slain, despoiled, and enslaved, Belgian women outraged, and Belgian children mutilated. But the Vatican is apparently using all its influence to secure a peace satisfactory to Germany.²⁰²

"We attack the religious faith of no one," declared the Standard, "but this is not a question of faith but of insidious political policy" Furthermore, can it "be supposed that the enemy intriguers who have for three years actively conspired in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, not to mention the United States, have been content to leave Canada alone?"²⁰³ asked the Standard.

No! The Hidden Hand of Germany has been at work, and is now at work in every constituency of Canada to defeat Union Government, and to paralyze Canada's army in continuing the war. In Quebec, where most of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's candidates are pro-Germans, where opposition to conscription has not stopped short of murder plots, this fact is obvious.²⁰⁴

The Standard declared that what is true of Quebec is true elsewhere except that it is not as easy to distinguish the "Hidden Hand."²⁰⁵

. . . Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his candidates exalt the traitor and the slack sic and condemn the soldier. It is for the women folk of the soldiers to give their answer at the polls.

Every woman who has a vote and fails to use it to support Union Government is herself a slacker.

²⁰¹ Ibid. ²⁰² Ibid. ²⁰³ Ibid. ²⁰⁴ Ibid. ²⁰⁵ Ibid.

She will be one who deserts the living soldiers, and forgets the sacrifice of the dead

Canada is menaced by open foes in Europe and insidious foes at home. To vote for Union Government is the woman's paramount duty, the duty of the hour.²⁰⁶

While not all Alberta papers, even those of a Unionist bent, would have agreed with the "conspiracy" pointed out by the Standard, the nature of the election campaign made it very difficult to deny that the election revolved around the government's conduct of the war in general and conscription in particular. The issues of the election seemed clear to both sides. It was only those Canadians who had not identified with either side that found it difficult to decide on December 17, 1917. Nevertheless, the verdict was to be decisive when the votes were finally counted.

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Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

UNION GOVERNMENT AND THE CANCELLATION OF EXEMPTIONS

On the morning of December 18, 1917 newspapers across Canada headlined the election results and announced a decisive Unionist victory. Most of the Canadian dailies predicted that there would be a Unionist majority in excess of forty seats when all of the votes were counted.¹ Premier Borden was satisfied with the results, reported the Calgary Herald as it announced that the Canadian press was "almost unanimous in its approval"² of the result. The results in the east were not surprising as Quebec had followed Laurier as predicted but in the west, a traditional stronghold of Liberalism, the extent of the success was welcomed by the Unionist press. The importance of the western support of the Unionist cause was underlined by the Calgary Albertan when it announced that "the voice of the west was decisive" and declared that it was not a triumph "for either of the old parties" but rather "a victory for democracy and justice."³ Nevertheless, the Albertan insisted that the new government was on trial and would have "to continue to earn the measure of confidence now reposed in it."⁴ The Edmonton Journal, the Lethbridge Herald, and the Medicine Hat News also welcomed the result while the Edmonton Bulletin,

¹ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 18, 1917, p. 1.

² Herald, December 18, 1917, p. 1.

³ Albertan, December 18, 1917, p. 1.

⁴ Ibid.

quite understandably, was furious.⁵

Although final results would not be forthcoming for some time, the Bulletin observed that the election results were sufficiently complete "to indicate that Big Business has succeeded in its conspiracy to turn the war conditions to their advantage and to secure control of the governing power of the country for another term."⁶ Editorially, the Bulletin continued to speak of a "country-wide plot to disfranchise voters" and emphasized that "if Canada is to be governed by the will of the people it is necessary that the enumerators, returning officers, and other public officials" who had taken part in this conspiracy be "rounded up and put in jail."⁷

In an editorial "The West enthrones the Interests"⁸ the Bulletin provided its reasons for the Unionist win. The first reason, suggested the Bulletin, was the cabinet shuffle which brought the newly elected provincial governments to support Union government. The second reason was the provisions of the War-time Elections Act under which thousands of citizens of German and Austrian birth were disfranchised; "tens of thousands of women were disfranchised; unlimited power was placed in the hands of enumerators to give or withhold the vote; and the military service law was kept hanging as a threat over the population."⁹ Furthermore, "newspapers, with two or three

⁵ Journal, December 18, 1917, p. 1; Herald, December 18, 1917, p. 1; News, December 18, 1917, p. 1; Bulletin, December 18, 1917, p. 1.

⁶ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 18, 1917, p. 9.

⁷ Ibid. ⁸ Ibid., December 19, 1917, p. 9. ⁹ Ibid.

exceptions, lined up behind the government."¹⁰ "Under these circumstances,"¹¹ argued the Bulletin, the landslide in the west could easily be accounted for.

One other provision of the Electoral Act also received some comment in the Alberta press. This was the section of the Act which allowed a soldier to assign his vote to a constituency of his choice if he did not have a permanent residence in Canada. It was suggested that officers were using their influence to direct these votes into constituencies where the Unionist cause might be in trouble.¹² The Edmonton Journal denied that there had been any manipulation of the service vote. "It should be remembered," declared the Journal, "that all the voting had to be finished by yesterday and that choices of constituency had to be made by then;"¹³ therefore there could not have been any switching of votes to areas where they would have done the most good.

The solid vote for Unionism in English Canada was also welcomed by the Calgary Herald.¹⁴ In Alberta Unionist wins were indicated in eleven of the twelve constituencies in the province. The constituency of Victoria was clearly a Liberal win and a close race was occurring in Edmonton West.¹⁵ The Bulletin thought it rather "peculiar" that the constituency of Victoria which had "probably the

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Ibid.

¹²Edmonton Journal, December 19, 1917, p. 9.

¹³Ibid. ¹⁴Herald, December 19, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁵Bulletin (Edmonton), December 19, 1917, p. 1.

largest disfranchised vote of any constituency in the west"¹⁶ had elected a Liberal, Mr. W. H. White, by a substantial majority.¹⁷

On December 20 the Bulletin pointed out that if Parliament was split on traditional party lines, there would be 135 Liberals and 93 Conservatives in the House.¹⁸ The Bulletin was indulging in wishful thinking, for it would seem somewhat questionable to assume that these Liberal Unionists, which the Bulletin was counting as its own, would have been re-elected under the Laurier banner. Any prediction as to the final number of seats for each side was rather speculative at this point since both the outlying polls and the soldiers' votes had yet to be counted. Nevertheless, there was little question about the overall outcome and the fact that the country had divided along racial lines. The major reason for this was the fact that the election was fought on the conscription issue. The Camrose Canadian regretted that the election was fought on an issue that left "Canada openly divided"¹⁹ while the Calgary Herald rationalized this development by suggesting that it was Sir Wilfrid Laurier's "insistence upon a wartime election and his refusal to participate in a Union Government" which forced "the racial issue into a prominence which has no right in this country."²⁰ This was denied by the Liberal press which continued to

¹⁶Ibid., December 20, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁷When all the votes were counted the "substantial" majority turned out to be the smallest majority in Alberta. See Appendix II.

¹⁸Bulletin (Edmonton), December 20, 1917, p. 9.

¹⁹Canadian, December 20, 1917, p. 4.

²⁰Herald, December 20, 1917, p. 4.

insist that it was the Conservatives who had forced the conscription issue into prominence in order to show the necessity of a Union government and through this arrangement remain in power. The Bulletin continued to criticize the tactics of the government, including the Military Voters Act which appeared to have implications for Frank Oliver's constituency.²¹

In Edmonton West, with 34 polls to hear from on December 21, Griesbach's lead was down to 45 votes.²² On December 24 Oliver was 100 votes ahead with 15 polls to report.²³ The Bulletin outlined its complaints in a series of editorials. In addition to the Military Voters Act, the Bulletin continued to question the War-time Elections Act and the instructions issued to enumerators. The Bulletin argued that the "enumerator was specifically instructed to refuse the vote to all men whose papers were dated after 1902" although the law only referred to "men of enemy alien birth or speech naturalized after 1902."²⁴ Therefore, argued the Bulletin, thousands of electors were disfranchised not by the law but by the enumerators. Furthermore, the enumerators refused to accept certified copies of naturalization papers as fulfilling the requirements of the Act, resulting in further disfranchisement. This allowed the enumerators to hand pick the voters, argued the Bulletin. "If the Government candidate lost in any constituency it could only be because the enumerators did not do as

²¹Bulletin (Edmonton), December 20, 1917, p. 9.

²²Ibid., December 21, 1917, p. 1.

²³Ibid., December 24, 1917, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., January 5, 1918, p. 7.

well as was expected of them."²⁵ The Bulletin complained about other election irregularities in Edmonton West.²⁶

The Edmonton Journal denied the general charges against the government, maintaining that the Unionists would have won without the War-time Elections Act.²⁷ As to the specific complaints in Edmonton West, the Journal suggested that Frank Oliver might "save his energy and apply it to having these charges investigated by the means which the law of this country provides," unless he was simply "using this strong language to cover up his retreat into political oblivion."²⁸ Oliver would probably have denied that he was following the advice of the Journal when he finally filed a formal protest with the Supreme Court and requested that Greisbach be unseated.²⁹ The Calgary Albertan suggested that the number of charges of alleged wrongdoing in Edmonton West was reason enough to warrant an investigation.³⁰ Greisbach was not unseated, however, and the arrival of the soldiers' votes assured Oliver's loss in any case.

The government's majority was increased to sixty-eight seats. The greatest shift occurred in Nova Scotia where a government minority of two was changed to a majority of eight.³¹ In Alberta, the

²⁵Ibid. ²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Journal, January 11, 1918, p. 4.

²⁸Ibid., December 22, 1917, p. 4.

²⁹Ibid., January 29, 1918, p. 1.

³⁰Albertan, January 12, 1918, p. 1.

³¹Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1918, p. 1.

Unionists received 93 percent of the total overseas soldier vote.³²

The results at the end of February indicated that there were 153 Unionists elected of which 115 were Conservative Unionists and 38 were Liberal Unionists. The Laurier Liberals received 82 seats of which 62 were located in Quebec. West of the Ontario - Manitoba border there were only two Laurier Liberals elected--J. P. Molloy in Provencher riding in Manitoba and W. H. White in Victoria constituency in Alberta.³³

The government press was jubilant about the election results and the fact that conscription could now proceed. Shortly after the election the Bulletin launched a new editorial attack on the government position. It stated that "not a single recruit had been added to the Canadian army in the last seven months as a result of the Government effort either to enlist men voluntarily or to conscript men."³⁴ While the allegation concerning conscripts was true since the first draftees were to be called up on January 3, 1918, the Bulletin was unwilling to give the government credit for those recruits which had joined the forces. Presumably they joined in spite of efforts of the government. The Bulletin continued:

If reinforcements were urgently needed seven months ago as was claimed, the Government have been culpably indifferent to that need. If reinforcements were not urgently needed then the whole campaign for the present conscription measure and the reelection of the Government was based on false pretences. Whether the Government have been

³²Albertan (Calgary), February 26, 1918, p. 1.

³³C. A. R., 1917, p. 643.

³⁴Bulletin (Edmonton), December 20, 1917, p. 9.

englecting [sic] the army or deceiving the public will be shown by their conduct now that they have acquired unquestioned power to carry out their purposes, whatever they may be.³⁵

While the Bulletin continued to question the value of conscription, other Alberta newspapers called for more conscription. The Alberta Non-Partisan was one of the papers which continued to advocate conscription of wealth.

Today we stand for Universal Conscription. If conscription is the fairest and most logical way when men are needed, why jib at it when these material things that are equally essential for the prosecution of the war are needed. Why not enlist all for national service and abolish entirely the gigantic profits and profiteering of 1917.³⁶

The Medicine Hat News supported this view and also called for government conscription of industry and labour so that men could "be released from manufacturing luxuries" and be redistributed among "essential industries."³⁷ The Albertan, an early supporter of conscription of wealth, advocated conscripting the "alien born" in an editorial on January 19. "It is very unfair that while we are conscripting our own British and Canadian born for service in the trenches at \$1.10 per day that we decline to conscript aliens born in enemy countries to do anything at all."³⁸ The Albertan contended that the aliens were "getting fat on the war"³⁹ and were not working full time. Other papers led by the Calgary Herald advocated the introduction of Union government at the provincial level as another way of furthering the war

³⁵Ibid. ³⁶Non-Partisan, January 4, 1918, p. 1.

³⁷News, January 16, 1918, p. 2.

³⁸Albertan (Calgary), January 19, 1918, p. 3. ³⁹Ibid.

effort.⁴⁰ The takeover of American railways by the United States government led the Calgary Albertan to call for Canada to do likewise. The Albertan noted that:

The Unionist-Liberal papers are almost a unit in declaring in favor of the complete nationalization of the Canadian Railways. The Conservative-Unionist papers are rather opposed to it, while the Laurier Liberals have a habit of making no pronounced statement about anything very much.⁴¹

The Albertan also welcomed the new draft system which had been introduced into the United States.⁴² The Bulletin reported that the United States expected to add 700,000 effectives each year under their draft law.⁴³ The Alberta press also followed the issue of conscription in Australia with considerable interest and all of the Alberta dailies commented on the defeat of a referendum on compulsory military service. In its analysis of the reasons for this failure, the Calgary Herald pointed to the opposition of labour and Roman Catholics to conscription.⁴⁴ A parallel to the Canadian situation may have been intended by the Herald as it placed 'Roman Catholics' in larger print although it actually stated that this reaction was of lesser importance.⁴⁵ The Medicine Hat News showed that Australia had already given ten percent, five hundred thousand men, out of a population of five million while Canada had only given two percent [?] or four hundred thousand

⁴⁰Herald, December 20, 1917, p. 1.

⁴¹Albertan (Calgary), January 8, 1918, p. 3.

⁴²Ibid., January 4, 1918, p. 1.

⁴³Bulletin (Edmonton), January 4, 1918, p. 1.

⁴⁴Herald, December 24, 1917, p. 1. ⁴⁵Ibid.

out of eight million.⁴⁶ Although the statistics used by the News left a little to be desired, its point remained the same. This comparison with Australia and other Commonwealth countries was a common way of arguing that compulsion was needed to make Canadians do their duty. J. W. Dafoe was to use this reasoning in a letter to Thomas Cote.

Do you not know my dear Cote, that in Australia, 14 percent of the whole population enlisted voluntarily? On that basis there would be in the Canadian armies today about 150,000 French Canadians in place of 15,000 or 20,000 at the outside. When you have done half as much as Australia it will be time to talk.

The trouble between the English and French Canadian has become acute, because French Canadians have refused to play their part in this war--being the only known race of white men to quit. They try to excuse themselves by alleging that they have domestic grievances which should first be righted. The excuse, if true, would be contemptible. In the face of an emergency like this domestic questions have to stand.⁴⁷

This type of emotionally charged letter was also found among the published opinion in Alberta dailies. English Canada held Quebec accountable for her slackness. Many believed that the Military Service Act would be used to remedy these inequities.

On January 3 the first draft of men under the Military Service Act reported and although the Edmonton Journal insisted that the enforcement of the Act would be carried out with little trouble, it was soon apparent that many Canadians failed to report.⁴⁸ Early

⁴⁶News, January 3, 1918, p. 2.

⁴⁷Dafoe Papers: J. W. Dafoe to Thomas Cote, January 1, 1918, quoted in A. M. Willms, "Conscription 1917: A Brief for the Defence," Canadian Historical Review, XXXVII, No. 4 (December, 1960), 347.

⁴⁸Journal, January 3, 1918, p. 4.

reports in the Alberta press indicated that 25 percent of the men called up in Calgary had failed to report while in Regina the figure was 58 1/2 percent and in Montreal 50 percent.⁴⁹ The Edmonton Bulletin commented on the lack of figures from the Toronto area and denounced the government order forbidding publication of the figures from Quebec.⁵⁰ On January 11 the Edmonton Bulletin carried the Service Act figures. The total registration for the Dominion was 404,395 of which 28,105 were in Alberta. Over 25,000 had applied for exemption with 18,093 being granted mainly for agricultural reasons and other cases were still pending.⁵¹ On February 13, 1918 the Edmonton Journal reported that 46,448 troops had been raised since September 1917. Of these, 30,248 were draftees with the remainder being volunteers including a large number from the United States.⁵² This was not providing the hundred thousand which Premier Borden thought necessary and the Alberta press began to speculate that other classes would soon be called.⁵³

The Calgary Herald suggested that the government should call the third class which consisted of single men and bypass the second group of young married men.⁵⁴ In the same issue of

⁴⁹Medicine Hat News, January 7, 1918, p. 1; Albertan (Calgary), January 5, 1918, p. 19.

⁵⁰Bulletin, January 5, 1918, p. 7; January 9, 1918, p. 7.

⁵¹Ibid., January 11, 1918, p. 1.

⁵²Journal, February 13, 1918, p. 1.

⁵³Bulletin (Edmonton), February 14, 1918, p. 11; Calgary Herald, February 14, 1918, p. 6; Edmonton Journal, February 13, 1918, p. 1.

⁵⁴Herald, February 14, 1918, p. 6.

February 14 the Herald stated that "a correspondent with the armies at the front" had reported "that the Canadian forces in Flanders and elsewhere are now stronger than ever before as a result of the operation of the Military Service Act."⁵⁵ The strength of the Canadian forces had been maintained by using reinforcements from the Fifth Division stationed in England. On February 9, 1918 the Fifth Division was officially dissolved and the remaining troops were used to provide men for units in the field.

The Edmonton Bulletin failed to question the Herald on the rather rapid reinforcement of the Canadian forces--from civilian clothes to the trenches in Flanders in six weeks. If the Bulletin missed an opening it was only to complete its own editorial on "the facts as to conscription."⁵⁶ The Bulletin disputed the figures given by Borden and presented its own list of those joining the Canadian forces from September 1, 1917 to February 9, 1918 which it compared with the numbers eligible for each province.⁵⁷

| | <u>Total Eligible</u> | <u>Called</u> | <u>%</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|
| Ontario | 125,750 | 8,836 | 7.0 |
| Quebec | 177,104 | 2,389 | 1.3 |
| Nova Scotia | 26,354 | 291 | 1.1 |
| New Brunswick | 17,065 | 1,124 | 6.5 |
| Manitoba | 22,897 | 2,872 | 12.1 |
| Saskatchewan | 46,733 | 1,862 | 3.9 |
| Alberta | 28,105 | 1,283 | 4.2 |
| British Columbia | 15,821 | 1,750 | 11.0 |

From these statistics the Bulletin reached its usual

⁵⁵Ibid. ⁵⁶Bulletin, February 18, 1918, p. 7.

⁵⁷Ibid.

conclusions;⁵⁸ men were being conscripted from the provinces which had provided most of the volunteers and men were not being secured in as large numbers as under volunteer enlistment.⁵⁹ The Bulletin also concluded that conscription as an inspiration to voluntary enlistment was a complete failure. It had noted in a series of editorials that enlistments had dropped since the announcement of conscription and quoted figures to prove its point.⁶⁰ The Bulletin was also quick to point out time and time again that, "If the hundred and thirty thousand men in France stood in such urgent need of reinforcements in May last that it was necessary to rush a conscription measure through parliament," why did it take until January 14, 1918 to put "10,000 men in Khaki?"⁶¹ The Bulletin's view of the Military Service Act was clear as it explained on January 26:

Compulsory military service under proper conditions, is the living expression of a democracy in arms. But the present conscription law, as passed and enforced is an expression of militarist tyranny-- and is in the same class as the election law upon which the Government depends for its indefinite continuation in power.⁶²

The Bulletin also elaborated on the merits of the government.

No other Government in the worlds history ever so successfully exploited the sacrifices of the nation for the political and financial profit of themselves and friends as did the Canadian Bolsheviki through their bogus conscription.⁶³

⁵⁸These statistics are open to question. While most of the totals are within a reasonable margin of those eligible (in Class 1 only), Quebec is about 60,000 too high. See C. A. R., 1918, p. 475.

⁵⁹Bulletin (Edmonton), February 18, 1918, p. 7.

⁶⁰Ibid., January 22, 1918, p. 7. ⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., January 26, 1918, p. 7. ⁶³Ibid.

On January 31 the Calgary Herald carried an article which predicted that the government would call out young men as they reached the age of twenty. This prediction came from military officers at Winnipeg. The Herald did not comment editorially but noted that about sixty thousand men reached the age of twenty every year in Canada.⁶⁴ On February 13, the Edmonton Journal reported that over thirty thousand draftees had been raised and predicted that other classes would be called.⁶⁵

On February 19 the Calgary Herald reported that a treaty had been signed by Canada and the United States which would aid in their efforts to fully utilize their manpower under the terms of their respective laws.⁶⁶ This treaty was signed following the completion of a similar treaty between Great Britain and the United States. Under the provisions of the treaties, the United States was permitted to draft British subjects in the United States who were between the ages of twenty and forty-five while Great Britain and Canada could draft American citizens between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one. The Alberta press welcomed this measure as it was thought that it would help to catch Canadian defaulters who had crossed the border to escape the Military Service Act. An estimated thirty thousand eligible men would be affected by the treaty with about seventeen hundred Americans in Alberta subject to its terms.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Herald, January 31, 1918, p. 1.

⁶⁵Journal, February 13, 1918, p. 1.

⁶⁶Herald, February 19, 1918, p. 1.

⁶⁷Bulletin (Edmonton), February 20, 1918, p. 1.

Another point debated in the Alberta press had its beginnings in the election campaign of 1917. In that campaign General Mewburn, on behalf of the government, had stated that farmers would not be drafted. The Bulletin pointed out on January 4 that it was not "within the power of the Minister of Militia to abrogate the provisions of the Military Service Act"⁶⁸ and hence the exemptions he had spoken of could not be granted until after the men had been called up. While the Bulletin objected to Mewburn's statements, his right to grant such exemptions had been clarified by an Order in Council on December 31, 1917 which stated that "in any case where a person engaged in agriculture has applied for exemption and been refused, the Minister of Militia may, by order under his hand, discharge such person from Military Service."⁶⁹ The Bulletin then objected to the fact that it was left to the discretion of the Minister whether any particular farmer was exempted or not. "That situation is neither fair to the farmer nor desirable on general grounds,"⁷⁰ declared the Bulletin which had wanted the basis for exemption of farmers clearly stated in the Military Service Act or in an Order in Council. It did not view the power of decision being given to the Minister of Militia as a check upon the abuses of the Act. "If farmers are not exempt because they are farmers, what justification is there," asked the Bulletin, "for empowering a Minister to exempt a certain individual on the ground that he is a farmer?"⁷¹

⁶⁸Ibid., January 4, 1918, p. 1; January 7, 1918, p. 4.

⁶⁹C. A. R., 1918, p. 464.

⁷⁰Bulletin (Edmonton), January 21, 1918, p. 7. ⁷¹Ibid.

The exemption of farmers was of continual interest to the Alberta press during the spring and summer of 1918. The Lethbridge Herald suggested that there should be an individual appointed from each district to look after the exemption of farmers as this would prevent abuses of the exemption privilege and would ensure that labour was properly distributed.⁷² The Edmonton Journal agreed that those who were seeking agricultural exemptions "should be watched carefully."⁷³ The Journal referred to a letter from Henry Wise Wood, President of the United Farmers of Alberta, in which Wood commented on his sons' exemptions. Wood stated that because of their exemption there was a "special duty resting on them to produce to the limit of their ability those things which will contribute most to the cause which our soldiers are fighting."⁷⁴

On February 8, 1918 the Calgary Albertan announced that an Order in Council had been issued by the militia department which would facilitate the release of men who had been drafted under the Military Service Act to the detriment of agricultural production.⁷⁵ On February 15, 1918 an Ottawa release published in the Bulletin announced that farm labour would not be conscripted under the Military Service Act. Instead a registration of manpower would be attempted.⁷⁶ The Canada Food Board announced that it was preparing plans for the

⁷²Herald, January 8, 1918, p. 4.

⁷³Journal, January 12, 1918, p. 4. ⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Albertan, February 8, 1918, p. 1; C.A.R., 1918, p. 465.

⁷⁶Bulletin (Edmonton), February 15, 1918, p. 1.

mobilization of labour for spring seeding operations. This plan would involve registering all persons over sixteen years of age, reported the Calgary Herald.⁷⁷

Organized labour wasted no time in recording its objection to the government's latest plan but withheld its official disapproval until further facts were known. On February 16 the Albertan reported that the government had indeed decided on compulsory registration. The Albertan approved of this action and noted that the government had decided against actual conscription of labour not because of the principle involved, but because it was not practicable. "Farmers in Alberta are suspicious that a man conscripted to labour may not be worth his board,"⁷⁸ suggested the Albertan.

The government was very concerned about agricultural production and indicated its concern when it announced that "in all bona fide cases where the young man intended to work this year on a farm the exemption had been granted."⁷⁹ The government also put an end to the rumours which the Alberta press had carried concerning the conscription of enemy alien labour.⁸⁰ Premier Borden also assured naturalized subjects from alien countries that the government had no intention of depriving them of their property.⁸¹ The Albertan found this reassuring as it was Borden's government which "dispossessed

⁷⁷Herald, February 15, 1918, p. 1.

⁷⁸Albertan (Calgary), February 16, 1918, p. 3.

⁷⁹C. A. R., 1918, p. 465.

⁸⁰Calgary Herald, February 16, 1918, p. 1.

⁸¹Bulletin (Edmonton), February 21, 1918, p. 1.

these people of their votes.⁸²

On February 21 the government's announcement of the organization of Soldiers of the Soil, which was intended to organize twenty-five thousand school boys for work on the farms, was welcomed in the Alberta press.⁸³ In particular that section of the Alberta press which supported the government was pleased with the government's actions with respect to the exemption of farmers. The Lethbridge Herald observed on February 27 that although the majority of exemptions to date had been given to farmers, they would have to report to district registrars in May and in November to prove that they were bona fide farmers.⁸⁴

For a few weeks it appeared that the issue was settled. The first indication of a reassessment by the Alberta press was contained in an article in the Edmonton Bulletin on April 12. The Bulletin announced that all farmers who were exempted would have to report and show what they had done to deserve exemptions.⁸⁵ On the following day the Bulletin reported a rumour that all exemptions would be eliminated for class one⁸⁶ and on April 15 and 16 the Alberta press carried the shocking news that all exemptions were indeed cancelled.⁸⁷

⁸²Albertan (Calgary), February 21, 1918, p. 3.

⁸³Bulletin (Edmonton), February 22, 1918, p. 1; Albertan (Calgary), February 22, 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁴Herald, February 27, 1918, p. 4.

⁸⁵Bulletin, April 12, 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁶Ibid., April 13, 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁷Calgary Herald, April 16, 1918, p. 1; Medicine Hat News, April 17, 1918, p. 1.

On April 17 the Bulletin outlined the principal changes under the new Order in Council. It called out all unmarried men and widowers without children between the ages of twenty and twenty-three. All nineteen-year old males were to register without delay and all young men as they reached the age of nineteen came under the Military Service Act. It proposed to call out, under treaty, citizens of foreign countries resident in Canada for service in the same manner as British subjects.⁸⁸

On April 19 Sir Robert Borden moved a resolution which asked Parliament to sanction the Order in Council referred to above.⁸⁹ Parliament was asked to give the Governor in Council authority to call out the men of any age in any class and to abolish all exemptions in any case. In effect, the Order in Council removed all exemptions with one exception. The Minister of Militia was given authority to grant exemptions to men who had relatives at the front. Even men who had obtained exemptions in England and returned home were recalled, providing they were physically fit. The drastic action was taken because of the seriousness of the situation on the western battlefields.⁹⁰ Premier Borden admitted that the regulations would involve some hardship on the part of individuals but insisted that it was absolutely necessary.⁹¹

Laurier objected to the Order in Council, claiming that it was a wide departure from the Military Service Act and also criticized the failure of the Act in Quebec. Other Liberals were much more

⁸⁸ Bulletin (Edmonton), April 17, 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁹ C. A. R., 1918, p. 460.

⁹⁰ Albertan (Calgary), April 17, 1918, p. 1.

⁹¹ C. A. R., 1918, p. 460.

specific in their objections. An amendment to exempt farmers was moved and defeated as was another amendment which would have delayed the implementation of the Order in Council. The Premier's motion was passed 114 to 65 votes.⁹² Needless to say this Order in Council necessitated other changes in the calling of men to the colours as the grounds for exemption were now extremely limited. Reaction to the limitation of exemptions, however, was not as constrained.

In Alberta, the press generally supported Borden's move. The withdrawal of Russia from the war and the transfer of German troops to the western front had triggered considerable discussion as to where the anticipated German offensive would occur in the spring of 1918. Many papers concluded that it would be at Ypres, where the Canadians were now holding the line.⁹³ This spring offensive had precipitated Borden's decision that the provision of further men for the allied forces was absolutely necessary. This action had been urged by Lloyd George in a telegram to the Governor-General on April 1.

As already announced, we propose to ask Parliament to authorize immediate measures for raising fresh forces. I would also urge the Government of Canada to reinforce its heroic troops in the fullest possible manner, and with the smallest possible delay. Let no one think that what even the remotest of our Dominions can now do can be too late. Before this campaign is finished, the last man may count.⁹⁴

The Canadian government also faced the problem of Quebec's enormous number of applications for exemption and the large

⁹²Ibid., p. 461.

⁹³In actual fact the Canadians were located in the Lens-Mericourt sector, south of Ypres and outside the area of the German attack.

⁹⁴C.A.R., 1918, p. 460.

numbers granted by local tribunals. On April 5, Premier Borden stated that "in many parts of that Province [Quebec] exemptions were granted almost wholesale by the tribunals."⁹⁵ The number of appeals by military authorities of the decisions of these local boards would tend to support the Premier's charges. At the end of February, twenty-two thousand draftees from all over Canada were in uniform. Of these only two thousand were from Quebec.⁹⁶

When exemptions were not granted, many young men in Québec simply failed to report and attempts to arrest these defaulters resulted in riots in Quebec City beginning on March 28. Rioters destroyed many of the files of the Deputy Registrar of the Military Service Act and wrecked the offices of the Quebec Chronicle.⁹⁷ When the mayor failed to ask for the reading of the riot act, the Minister of Militia was forced to take this action. The military action involved approximately 1,800 men under Major-General F. L. Lessard and was subsequently legalized by an Order in Council on April 4; this allowed the Governor General in Council to declare martial law anywhere in Canada. The worst incident in Quebec occurred on April 1 when firing broke out between the troops and the rioters. Five soldiers were wounded and four rioters killed. The verdict of the coroner's jury may be used to indicate the respect which some residents held for the Military Service Act. In all four cases identical wording was used. The victim "was killed by a bullet fired from a rifle by the soldiers of His Majesty's forces while performing the duty of repressing a riot."⁹⁸ In the opinion of the jury,

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 462. ⁹⁶Ibid. ⁹⁷Ibid. ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 463.

... the persons killed on that occasion were innocent of participation in the said riot, which owed its origin to the tactless and grossly unwise fashion in which the Federal police in charge of the Military Service Act did their work, it should be the duty of the Government to reasonably indemnify the families of the victims who have been found innocent and unarmed and to pay indemnities to all who suffered damages from that riot.⁹⁹

One might inquire what these citizens were doing strolling at night in the midst of a large mob in a city under military law and despite the notices posted throughout the city requiring citizens to remain at home.

The serious situation in Quebec received front page coverage in the Alberta press as well as editorial comment, calling upon the government to enforce the law generally and the Military Service Act in particular. The Calgary Herald suggested that the Union government should see that the Act was strictly enforced in Quebec, "not in time but now,"¹⁰⁰ while the Lethbridge Herald suggested that the fate of the Union government rested upon how Sir Robert Borden and his Cabinet handled the Quebec problem.¹⁰¹ The Albertan declared that the "government must take active steps to protect its rights and to carry out the will of the people."¹⁰² Both the Calgary Albertan and the Calgary Herald welcomed the announcement that the rioters who were eligible for service were to be called immediately. The Albertan, in its approval, suggested that if the Quebec rioters were not afraid of Canadian infantry then they would not "be afraid of

⁹⁹ Ibid. ¹⁰⁰ Herald, April 1, 1918, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Herald, April 1, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁰² Albertan (Calgary), April 2, 1918, p. 3.

Germans."¹⁰³ At the same time the Herald noted that there were four men killed and others wounded in the first clash between "Sir Wilfrid Laurier's constituents in Quebec"¹⁰⁴ and the authorities over the Military Service Act. Laurier's silence, charged the Herald, has been regarded "as evidence of consent" by his constituents. "The result of that leadership is a casualty list of dead and wounded. Sir Wilfrid Laurier should hang his head in shame."¹⁰⁵

The Edmonton Bulletin denied these charges and noted that "Col. Currie, Unionist M.P. for North Simcoe" had another view. "He thinks that Bourassa and Le Devoir have a large part of the responsibility."¹⁰⁶ By this statement the Bulletin was attempting to place the blame on the government as the Bulletin had never accepted Bourassa's support of Laurier in Quebec.

The announcement of martial law and amendments to the Military Service Act to enforce conscription were welcomed in the Alberta press. When the rumours of the previous two weeks had been passed into law on April 16, the cancellation of exemptions was supported in the Alberta press with the exception of the Bulletin which objected to the cancellation of agricultural exemptions. Indeed it was the cancellation of exemptions for men engaged in agriculture which caused a considerable discussion in the Alberta press. Supporters of the government's move, such as the Calgary Albertan, lauded the

¹⁰³ Ibid., April 3, 1918, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Calgary Herald, April 3, 1918, p. 6. ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Bulletin, April 9, 1918, p. 7.

Dominion Parliament for the quick passage of the changes.¹⁰⁷ A new registration of manpower was predicted for June and the Edmonton Bulletin predicted on April 24 that the new draft would be called to the colours in the early part of next week.¹⁰⁸ The Bulletin regarded the cancellation of exemptions as an admission of failure on the part of the Borden government's conscription policy.

Sir Robert Borden on Friday frankly told Parliament that the Military Service Act had done precisely what its critics said it would do, given exemptions where it was not deserved, and promoted race feeling and riots but failed to secure the needed reinforcements for the fighting line. If he had listened to reason last summer the Canadian army overseas would be fifty thousand stronger and it would not be necessary now to knock food production now by calling out farmers and farm hands in the middle of the spring seeding operations.¹⁰⁹

The situation with respect to exemptions was examined by the Calgary Albertan on April 25.¹¹⁰ Based on an Ottawa report of the previous day, the Albertan reviewed the effect of exemptions on the operation of the Military Service Act. The Albertan reported that 118,722 exemptions were granted on the basis of being medically unfit and 200,881 for other reasons. There were 34,751 appeals of the decisions by the applicants and 45,981 by the authorities. Of the appeals by applicants, 20,705 were granted exemption while 11,462 were refused exemption. Including military appeals, exemptions claimed throughout Canada totalled 373,184 of which 254,412 had been found to be medically unfit or had not yet been examined. In the same

¹⁰⁷ Albertan, April 23, 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Bulletin, April 24, 1918, p. 7. ¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Albertan, April 25, 1918, p. 1.

article, the Albertan pointed out that only 2,350 men had been secured from Quebec, while the Military Service Act had brought forth 3,199 draftees from Alberta.¹¹¹

"This scheme should get everybody,"¹¹² announced the Calgary Herald in reference to the national registration scheme and the new regulations for the enforcement of the Military Service Act. Editorially, the Herald defended the sons of southern Alberta ranchers as they were essential to the stockmen for the operation of the ranches. The Herald suggested that these men be "detailed for agricultural duty without military pay" if it was clear that they could serve the war cause better at home than in the military.

On August 26 the Herald reported the farmers' protests to the new order. The farmers insisted that the taking of all men in the twenty to twenty-two age group would severely injure agricultural production. A deputation of farmers received very "little comforting assurance"¹¹⁴ from General Mewburn although he promised to consider their request. On April 27 the Alberta dailies reported Borden's statements from New York.¹¹⁵ The Premier insisted that every able-bodied man would be conscripted. At the same time reports of the need for men at the front were being carried in the press.¹¹⁶

The Calgary Herald reported the continuing objections of

¹¹¹ Ibid. ¹¹² Herald, April 22, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 6. ¹¹⁴ Ibid., April 26, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Bulletin (Edmonton), April 27, 1918, p. 1; Calgary Herald, April 27, 1918, p. 1; Albertan (Calgary), April 27, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Bulletin (Edmonton), April 27, 1918, p. 1.

the farmers of Ontario and New Brunswick to the cancellation of exemptions¹¹⁷ while the Albertan quoted N. W. Rowell who insisted that the "government is going to go ahead with its manpower proposals no matter what opposition may develop."¹¹⁸ This was indeed strong language as he was speaking to a meeting of farmers opposed to exemptions at the time. On May 1, 1918 a committee urged the "Government to keep agriculture well manned"¹¹⁹ and it was speculated that farmers might not be called until the last. On May 4 the Albertan carried Borden's declaration to farmers that the need for men is more important than the need for production¹²⁰ and on May 6 the Albertan supported the Premier in an editorial:

Sir Robert Borden, with considerable courage, told the farmers of Eastern Canada that a certain number of young Canadians were more needed overseas than even in production. The Albertan is inclined to believe his statement is correct. He is in a position to know.¹²¹

The Albertan maintained that the farms would not be depleted and suggested that this was "no time to interpose petty objections most of which are made to embarrass the government."¹²² In fact, the Albertan criticised the opposition for "too much hostility" and suggested that the election was over and that there was "more need of co-operation now than at any preceding time."¹²³ The Albertan was

¹¹⁷ Herald, April 30, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ Albertan (Calgary), April 30, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Bulletin (Edmonton), May 2, 1918, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Albertan (Calgary), May 4, 1918, p. 1.

¹²¹ Ibid., May 6, 1918, p. 3. ¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., May 7, 1918, p. 3.

particularly upset with the Liberal Monthly which continued to criticise the Borden government. This criticism, suggested the Albertan, served no useful purpose and the magazine "should go back to the policy which it and its promoters adopted at the beginning of the war."¹²⁴

The Edmonton Bulletin also continued its criticism of the government's policy in an editorial of May 8 entitled "Conscripting the Farmer."¹²⁵ "Either the campaign for food production and food thrift was a farce," declared the Bulletin, "or the conscription of farmers is a tragedy" not only "to the men conscripted of course; but far more to the world."¹²⁶

The Bulletin was quick to report that the western farmers would not organise a protest on the draft, a position announced by H. H. Higgenbottom, Secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta, and criticised Ontario farmers for their pro-conscription stand.¹²⁷ "Conscription in Ontario accompanied by exemption in Quebec is apparently not recognized" among eastern farmers "as the way to win the war or preserve the strength of the country,"¹²⁸ declared the Bulletin. Front page articles in the Alberta press reported the growing numbers of Ontario farmers who were pouring into Ottawa to protest the cancellation of exemptions.¹²⁹

On May 15 the Alberta press carried Borden's answer to these protests. Borden lauded the farmers for their loyalty but

¹²⁴ Ibid. ¹²⁵ Bulletin, May 8, 1918, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Ibid. ¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 1. ¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Albertan (Calgary), May 14, 1918, p. 1; Calgary Herald, May 14, 1918, p. 1; Bulletin (Edmonton), May 15, 1918, p. 1.

insisted that they had "done no better than any other class."¹³⁰ In rejecting their petitions the Premier stated that "if farmers were exempted altogether, exemptions would have to be granted men engaged in other essential occupations."¹³¹ Among the Alberta daily press the Edmonton Bulletin was most critical of Borden's actions.

There is no way in which any certain number of men efficient in farm work can do as much to save the allied cause as by putting seed in the ground on western farms this spring. The food of the allies for this and succeeding years of war must come from the prairie regions of Canada and the United States or it cannot be secured at all. For months past the government has assured the country in the most solemn manner that to maintain the food supply was a paramount necessity. What the Canadian government said was reinforced by the equally solemn assertions of the authorities of the United States and Great Britain. What they said, and all they said in the subject, was true beyond question. And still the order is issued to conscript wholesale and without exemption of any kind, not only the men from 19 to 23 but all men from 19 to 35 who are unmarried and who by reduced standards can be classed as physically fit.¹³²

The following day the Bulletin commented on reports that workers at the Davis ship building company at Quebec were to be exempted. Evidently the Davis ship building company of Quebec "has a bigger pull with the Union government than have the United Farmers of Alberta."¹³³ The position of the United Farmers of Alberta had been one of support for Borden in this matter although protest meetings were reported at New Norway and Leduc on May 15.¹³⁴ The meeting

¹³⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), May 15, 1918, p. 1.

¹³¹ Ibid. ¹³² Ibid., p. 9.

¹³³ Ibid., May 14, 1918, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid., May 15, 1918, p. 9.

at Leduc was adjourned without making the intended protest and the vice-president of the U. F. A. declared that the majority of farmers would support the government action.¹³⁵ The Albertan referred to the U. F. A. action as:

. . . wise and courageous. The people of Alberta, we believe, approve of the decision of the U. F. A. and are proud of the courage and the statesmanship of the executive which took such a decision in such a convincing and decisive manner.¹³⁶

The contrast between the loyalty of the western farmer and the protesting of the eastern farmer was a favorite theme of the Alberta press. The western farmer is a "statesman and a patriot," declared the Albertan. "Never again will the eastern manufacturer dare to point the finger of suspicion at the western plains and yell disloyalty at our people."¹³⁷ The Edmonton Bulletin also pointed to a distinction between the Ontario farmers and the Alberta farmers.

Ontario farmers base their protests against the new conscription order in council on the fact that farmers were promised exemption when Sir Robert Borden needed their votes.

Alberta farmers base their objection to the same order in council on the fact that it hampers food production at a time when the food supply is less assured than the supply of men for the fighting line.

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Alberta farmers are not pleading to be paid for their votes as per agreement. They were asking to be allowed to serve where they can serve most effectively.¹³⁸

The cancellation of exemptions by the government soon

¹³⁵ Calgary Herald, May 16, 1918, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Albertan (Calgary), May 15, 1918, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid., May 16, 1918, p. 3.

¹³⁸ Bulletin, May 21, 1918, p. 9.

led to rumours of other government actions being undertaken to support the war effort. On May 10 the Medicine Hat News reported that aliens were being called up in Ontario, supposedly to be trained and placed in noncombat positions.¹³⁹ Borden denied this in a speech delivered in Victoria, British Columbia on May 23, 1918. In announcing that enemy aliens would not be conscripted Borden stated that the major reason for not doing so was the possibility of provoking reprisals by enemy states.¹⁴⁰ Some veterans groups demanded that aliens be deprived of their land and their vote. The veterans also expressed concern over reports from New York which stated that large numbers of Canadian draft dodgers were hiding in the Maine woods.¹⁴¹ Other reports claimed that a number of young men at Ottawa were avoiding conscription. The veterans asked the government to investigate these reports.¹⁴²

On June 1 nineteen-year-olds were required to report and new regulations requiring everyone to carry proof of their exemption from military service came into effect. The Bulletin advised its readers to carry proof of exemption on their person as they could be asked for it at any time.¹⁴³ The matter of exemptions for farmers was to be a constant theme of Bulletin editorials during June. On June 3 the Bulletin continued to insist that the farms were "the last

¹³⁹ News, May 10, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), May 24, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ Albertan (Calgary), May 14, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴² Bulletin (Edmonton), May 14, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Ibid., June 1, 1918, p. 9.

place conscription should be applied."¹⁴⁴ The following day a Bulletin editorial reported that despite Borden's announcement, "Reviewing tribunals" had "during the past week been giving recognition to the need of food production" and were "exempting farmers freely on that account."¹⁴⁵ On June 8 the Calgary Herald reported part of the proceedings of an Ontario farm convention held in Toronto. The declaration of one delegate that his "sons shall not go"¹⁴⁶ elicited a roar of approval from the delegates. On June 11 the Herald admitted that while it was the extremists who shouted the loudest, the final outcome of the convention eliminated this position.¹⁴⁷

The Alberta press continued its daily consideration of the position of the farmers. The Bulletin noted that many farmers had made large "expenditures to increase production in view of the exemption promises made by the Government,"¹⁴⁸ while the Albertan referred to the fact that Great Britain was calling men from the farms and the munitions factories and sending them to the front. "That is some indication of how much the men are needed in the front ranks,"¹⁴⁹ declared the Albertan. On June 14 the Bulletin, in a front page article, declared that under the British manpower bill farmers were not

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., June 3, 1918, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., June 4, 1918, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Herald, June 8, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., June 11, 1918, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 6, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Albertan (Calgary), June 7, 1918, p. 3.

called.¹⁵⁰ While most of the Alberta press did not pause to argue the point, the Albertan objected to this argument of the Bulletin and quoted London papers to show that British farmers were not exempt.

What a shocking offence it is for Canadian newspapers in the light of these facts regarding the situation in the old land to devote column after column of their space to telling the Canadian farmer how much worse he has been treated than the British farmer. Nowhere in the Dominion is the offence so glaring as in the case of the Edmonton paper, which went so far to say that "the English farmer is exempt while the Canadian farmer is conscripted."¹⁵¹

Nevertheless the matter of exemptions was crucial.

While the Calgary Herald suggested that the government would "in some way provide the necessary labour for the work,"¹⁵² the United Farmers of Alberta were beginning to question the government's policy and described the situation as "serious."¹⁵³ The Bulletin noted that the Grain Growers Guide was concerned that "the forces that prey upon the farmers are steadily organizing and becoming more powerful month by month."¹⁵⁴ "Obviously," suggested the Bulletin, "if the farmers are to 'rally' on their own behalf they will have to do it under other leaders than those who have gone into political partnership with the opposing interests."¹⁵⁵

While the Calgary Herald was announcing that there was "no need for 19 year old men to be called immediately," it also

¹⁵⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 14, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Albertan (Calgary), July 15, 1918, p. 3.

¹⁵² Herald, June 11, 1918, p. 6.

¹⁵³ Bulletin (Edmonton), June 14, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., June 15, 1918, p. 7. ¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

published an article announcing the "calling up of the 49, 50 and 51 year old class" in Britain in order to meet the "urgent need of manpower." ¹⁵⁶

Reports of farmers being granted exemptions appeared in the Alberta press beginning on Monday, June 17. The Edmonton Bulletin carried an Ottawa dispatch of June 18 which suggested that the call of 19 year olds would not be issued immediately and that the government might wait until the harvest was over. ¹⁵⁷ It appeared that the crisis for immediate manpower was over. The number of farmers who were receiving exemptions to November 1 tended to support this view. Meanwhile, all men and women sixteen years and over were required to register on June 22. ¹⁵⁸ The Bulletin suggested that there was not enough time allowed between the announcement and the registration for rural residents to be informed of the requirement and complained that no information had been given "as to the location of registrars." ¹⁵⁹

While the dailies were again concentrating on the issue of conscription and exemptions, the reaction of the Alberta weeklies elicited the following comment from the Calgary Albertan.

The Alberta weeklies have but little to say about the conscription order in council, of which much is said in this city. The Claresholm Advertiser Review criticizes the action of Ontario farmers in an adverse manner, and a correspondent in the Wetaskiwin

¹⁵⁶ Herald, June 15, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Bulletin, June 19, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 3; June 17, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., June 18, 1918, p. 7; June 19, 1918, p. 7.

Times censures the directors of the U.F.A. Other weekly newspapers have nothing to say, which is some indication that the feeling against conscription is not as strong as some would have us believe.¹⁶⁰

The issue of exemptions was far from settled and the ruling by the Alberta Supreme Court that the Order in Council calling up all classes and cancelling exemptions was illegal did much to stimulate further discussion.¹⁶¹ This ruling resulted from an "application of R. B. Bennett, K. C., acting for Norman Earl Lewis, for an order declaring that the latter, as a draftee under the Military Service Act,"¹⁶² was being illegally held by local military authorities. The appeal was granted and by a majority decision, the Order in Council was declared invalid. Mr. Justice Beck, in summation, argued that there was no power under the War Measures Act for issuing such an Order in Council. He declared that it was:

. . . an astounding proposition that Parliament after spending many weeks in discussion of the Military Service Act which, perhaps more than any other Bill, had been the subject of antagonism, both within and without Parliament, should leave it open to the Governor-in-Council to revoke this Act in whole, or even in part.¹⁶³

Two other justices concurred. In his judgement, Mr. Justice C. A. Stuart maintained "that Parliament had never intended to grant the Government power to override and repeal its own acts"¹⁶⁴ and Mr. Justice J. D. Hyndman observed that "men holding exemption

¹⁶⁰ Albertan, June 19, 1918, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., June 20, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁶² C. A. R., 1918, p. 468.

¹⁶³ Ibid. ¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 469.

certificates granted by lawfully-constituted tribunals are, by statute exempt from service." Therefore it was "a right derived by statute and, in my opinion, can only be taken away by statute."¹⁶⁵ The only supporter of the government's action was Chief Justice Horace Harvey. Nevertheless, the majority decision was critical as the whole policy of passing Orders in Council to meet emergencies while Parliament was not in session was under attack. The Canadian Annual Review for 1918 observed that 40,000 men had been conscripted under this Order in Council and noted that these might be sent overseas while the Lewis case was under appeal.¹⁶⁶ The Review, in referring to the Edmonton Bulletin as a determined opponent of all conscription or compulsion, quoted a Bulletin editorial of July 1.

Last week they railroaded 1,500 men out of Calgary for Overseas most of whom had held exemption papers such as that held by young Lewis. Their exemption papers had been taken from them and the exemption cancelled. Of the two or three thousand men still in Calgary the larger number held exemptions. These men may be shipped Overseas in defiance of the law as laid down by the Alberta Supreme Court while the Lewis case is under appeal.¹⁶⁷

The Review balanced the Bulletin report with the following comment from the Ottawa Journal.

To the ordinary layman not versed in the law, the decision of the Alberta Supreme Court would seem to ignore two very vital factors: (1) that the Governor-in-Council acted under the authority of the War Measures Act, an Act which specifically vested almost unlimited powers with the Cabinet to deal with just such emergent conditions as those the order in council in question was designed to meet; and (2) that in the Military Service Act there was a clause which provided that nothing in the Act should interfere with or detract from the powers vested in the Governor-in-Council under the War Measures Act.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. ¹⁶⁶ Ibid. ¹⁶⁷ Ibid. ¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Although the Minister of Justice asked for an emergency session of the Supreme Court of Canada, a decision was not reached by that body until the twentieth of July. In the interval the government was determined to proceed with the enforcement of the Act. On July 5 it passed an Order in Council which stated, "notwithstanding the said judgement," referring to the Alberta case, "and notwithstanding any judgement or any Order that may be made by any Court,"¹⁶⁹ instructions were to be sent to the officers commanding military districts in Canada ordering them to enforce the Act. This did little to clarify the situation as the Alberta Court launched Habeas Corpus proceedings on behalf of a soldier named Norton. It ordered Colonel Moore to appear and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The Minister of Militia suggested that all judicial proceedings "should be stayed pending the hearing"¹⁷⁰ by the Supreme Court and their decision. As the Supreme Court met in Ottawa, the situation in Alberta was reported as tense with the Alberta Court ordering the release of Norton and others held under the Act and with the military refusing to release the men. Armed resistance was used to prevent civil authorities from arresting Colonel Moore.

On July 18 the hearing of a test case involving Private G. E. Grey of Nipissing began in the Supreme Court.¹⁷¹ It was stated that no appeal from the Alberta case would be heard but that this test case would be used as an example for the hundreds of Habeas Corpus proceedings which were being held up pending this decision. On July 20 the Orders in Council were declared valid by a four to two

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. ¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 470. ¹⁷¹ Ibid.

decision.¹⁷² The Bulletin was quick to comment on the decision in the Grey case. The Bulletin agreed with Mr. Justice Iddington in his minority decision. Mr. Justice Iddington held that it "is a fundamental principle of our form and method of government that parliament cannot legislate the repeal of its own statutes by any other than its own act."¹⁷³ The "majority of the court take on opposite view," declared the Bulletin, "namely that parliament could and did by the War Measures Act of 1914 legislate away the right of self-government in Canada."¹⁷⁴

Other Alberta papers, including the Calgary Albertan, welcomed the Supreme Court decision.¹⁷⁵ Registration had slowed somewhat pending the outcome of the Supreme Court's decision. As of June 21, fifty-five thousand two hundred eighty-one men were registered under the Act. Of these, 9,970 came from Montreal with 2,848 from Quebec City.¹⁷⁶ On July 12, 1918 the Calgary Herald declared that 82,758 men had already been enrolled under the Military Service Act and announced that 30,747 were still available.¹⁷⁷ The method of arriving at totals was somewhat interesting. The Herald used the following method of computing the number of men raised under the Military Service Act.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 471

¹⁷³ Bulletin (Edmonton), July 23, 1918, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. ¹⁷⁵ Albertan, July 20, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ C. A. R., 1918, p. 464.

¹⁷⁷ Herald, July 12, 1918, p. 1. ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

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|---|---------------|
| Voluntary enlistments (joined in advance of call) | 17,769 |
| Men called and enrolled | 55,259 |
| Defaulters (registered) enrolled | 1,799 |
| Defaulters (not registered) enrolled | <u>7,931</u> |
| Total of Class 1 actually placed on duty | 82,758 |
| Men waiting to report | 7,245 |
| Not yet ordered to report | <u>23,502</u> |
| Total available | 30,747 |
| Also defaulters | 22,140 |
| On leave without pay | <u>11,276</u> |
| Also available | 33,416 |

The defaulters were usually blamed on Quebec by the English language press. The Edmonton Bulletin reacted to an article from the Orange Sentinel, one of the most vehement of the anti-Quebec papers in English Canada.¹⁷⁹ The Bulletin asked:

How did the French Canadian actions differ from those of Ontario? Ontario was short of her fair proportions of enlistments under voluntary service--very far short of the record of Alberta or British Columbia. Thousands of young men left Ontario to escape military service--probably as many or more than left Quebec.¹⁸⁰

The enforcement of the Military Service Act continued to be of interest to the Alberta press wherein it was often discussed in terms of loyalty to the government or the failure of the government to recognize the problems of the farmers. On July 23 the Albertan declared that "most farmers are sensible"¹⁸¹ and insisted that most were loyal supporters of the government. The Albertan maintained that it was a "small but vocal segment"¹⁸² who objected to conscription

¹⁷⁹ Bulletin, August 8, 1918, p. 7. ¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Albertan (Calgary), July 23, 1918, p. 3. ¹⁸² Ibid.

of their sons. On August 10 the front page of the Bulletin carried an Ottawa report of the previous day which announced that harvest leave was to be granted to men who had worked on farms before being called.¹⁸³ In the same issue the Bulletin quoted the Honourable Mr. Crothers, the Minister of Labour, who was "reported to have said at Vancouver that tens of thousands of men in Canada have been exempted from military service because they are engaged in essential occupations." "Who are these tens of thousands?" asked the Bulletin. "Conscription that only conscripts the man who is engaged in an industry that has no pull with the Government is not a conscription with which to win the war."¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, other factors influenced recruiting. The Canada-United States convention came into force on July 30, 1918.¹⁸⁵ It affected British citizens in the 20-44 age group in the United States and American citizens in the 18-45 age group in Canada. This convention gave these people three choices. They could enlist in the forces of their own country, enroll in the forces of their resident country or claim diplomatic exemption. Failing this, they would automatically become subject to the laws of their country of residence.¹⁸⁶

In Canada 32,072 United States citizens registered. None were conscripted. In the United States 46,000 British recruits were obtained and approximately two-thirds of these joined the C. E. F.¹⁸⁷ While this agreement helped to put an end to defaulters

¹⁸³ Bulletin (Edmonton), August 10, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 7. ¹⁸⁵ C. A. R., 1918, p. 476.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. ¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

residing in the other country, another proclamation issued on August 2 of 1918 gave deserters another chance. It promised those who had defaulted under the Military Service Act that they would not be punished if they reported for duty before August 24.¹⁸⁸ The Canadian Annual Review estimated that ten thousand men took advantage of this opportunity.¹⁸⁹ All Alberta papers carried this proclamation and even the Bulletin encouraged its readers to accept the generous terms of the measure.

Defaulters under the Military Service Act still have a week in which to report, under promise that they will not be punished for failing to comply earlier with the requirements. It is probably useless for a newspaper to try to advise men who have deliberately decided to evade the law. If any delinquents who may be amenable to advice read this paragraph, its purpose is to urge them to report without delay. Law is Law.¹⁹⁰

On August 20 the Calgary Herald revised its earlier estimates of the success of the Military Service Act. An Order in Council issued by the Justice Department defined what groups constituted reinforcements under the Military Service Act. Since volunteers and men on leave without pay were not to be counted, the Herald suggested that approximately 60,000 men had been raised under the Act.¹⁹¹ These figures were comparable to those accepted by the Edmonton Bulletin.¹⁹² On August 23 the Bulletin reacted to a report carried by the Winnipeg Free Press. It stated that Sir Robert Borden had

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 473-74. ¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 474.

¹⁹⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), August 17, 1918, p. 9.

¹⁹¹ Herald, August 20, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁹² Bulletin, August 23, 1918, p. 7.

reported that "in the recent offensive every battalion was able to go into action over-strength" with "ample reserves" and suggested that the above had "come about as the result of drafting 58,000 men and the voluntary enlistment of 19,000 more men, making a total of 77,000 men in the last year and a quarter."¹⁹³ The Bulletin questioned Sir Robert Borden's claim that the rate of reinforcements in May, a year prior, had been insufficient.

Voluntary enlistment at that time was providing men at the rate of from six to eight thousand per month. In the fifteen months which have elapsed, voluntary enlistment at the same rate would have provided from 90,000 to 120,000 men. If 77,000 recruits have been sufficient to bring and keep the Canadian division up to strength, it is obvious that from 90,000 to 120,000 voluntary enlisted men would have been more than ample for that purpose. Sir Robert's present statement abolished utterly the argument upon which he based the Military Service Act. That Act was not introduced because voluntary enlistment was not providing sufficient reinforcements. That fact is proven by the Premier's present statement. Conscription was decided upon not because it was necessary but because it was thought to be good politics.¹⁹⁴

On August 27 the Bulletin again offered an enlistment comparison and then went on to offer further charges of inequities under the Act. "Nearly one-half" of the draftees "were secured in Western Canada," declared the Bulletin, even though they "provided volunteer recruits in the earlier years of the war all out of proportion to their population." While it is true that the west contained more men of military age, "exemptions were not evenly granted across Canada"¹⁹⁵ resulting in unfair drafting of western Canadians.

The exempting power was put in the hands of local tribunals, governed by local sentiment. Where

¹⁹³ Ibid. ¹⁹⁴ Ibid. ¹⁹⁵ Ibid., August 27, 1918, p. 7.

that sentiment was strongly in favor of conscription, as in the western provinces, men were conscripted. Where that sentiment was against conscription, as in many parts of the eastern provinces, men were exempted. The aggregate result of this discriminative application of the exempting power is shown in the fact that from one-third of the population living west of the Great Lakes one-half of the drafted men have been taken despite the fact that this area also provided thousands more than its quota to the voluntary army.

The official statement, like its predecessors, confirmed the view that the Military Service Act was more truly a measure of restriction than of conscription. It had restricted and not enlarged the stream of reinforcements. It restricted the raising of reinforcements unfairly to those sections of the country where local sentiment was favorable to compulsory service. And instead of making military service a universal duty, it has restricted the duty of serving to men whom the accident of age placed in class I.¹⁹⁶

A Journal charge that it was "the limit of absurdity" to suppose that voluntary enlistment would have supplied the reinforcements required for the Canadian army only resulted in a repeat of the figures and argument which the Bulletin had used earlier.¹⁹⁷

The Alberta press also showed interest in the alien question. An Ottawa dispatch of August 16 was carried by several Alberta papers. All enemy aliens over the age of sixteen were required to register. Previously aliens who had no permanent place of residence were required to report monthly to the chief of police. The new legislation was not all inclusive. Certain friendly aliens, namely "Czechs or members of the Bohemian National Alliance, Turkish subjects who are by race Greeks, Armenians, Assyrians"¹⁹⁸ or of other communities opposed to the Turkish regime were exempted.

¹⁹⁶Ibid. ¹⁹⁷Ibid., August 28, 1918, p. 7.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., August 17, 1918, p. 1.

In addition to registration, travel was restricted. Enemy aliens had to produce "certificates of parole"¹⁹⁹ with notice of permission to travel in order to move from one place to another. These new regulations were welcomed by some of the western newspapers. The Edmonton Bulletin quoted the Regina Leader when it declared that the only place where an increase in the use of the German language was desirable was in the areas behind the allied lines where German prisoners were held.²⁰⁰ While the Bulletin tended to agree with this point of view, it did question why the new regulation requiring the registration of aliens over sixteen was necessary in view of the fact that all persons in the country had been required to register earlier.

We seem to be getting long on registration and short on results. Last June everybody in the country, alien or other, man or woman, over sixteen years of age was required to register, and either did so or left himself or herself open to punishment, disfranchisement and civil disabilities of various kinds. Nothing has yet been done in the way of making use of the information thus compiled, so far as the public is aware.²⁰¹

The Bulletin's criticisms of August 26 were timely as the government released its interim report on registration on August 29. The total registration in Canada was over five million with 317,402 registered in Alberta. This proved interesting as it equalled earlier estimates but the most relevant part of the report was the section related to the labour supply. The report insisted that there were many Canadians in Canada who were trained in farm work but who were employed in other occupations. The report questioned the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. ²⁰⁰ Ibid., August 22, 1918, p. 7.

²⁰¹ Ibid., August 26, 1918, p. 7.

position adopted by those who maintained that conscription was depleting farm labour. The report stated that it had "been demonstrated beyond question" that there was "an abundant supply of experienced labour willing on request to devote itself to agricultural work."²⁰²

The Calgary Canadian was not at all satisfied with the conscription measure and in its last major editorial on the subject called for equal conscription for all, although the Canadian would have preferred no compulsory service. The Canadian objected to the application of conscription to "certain men while others are not required to make any sacrifices." In addition to "people getting off,"²⁰³ the Canadian objected to profiteers and suggested that all people should be conscripted for labour with equal wages for all.

Other Alberta papers seemed to have lost interest in the conscription question in September. Reports from the front and the presence of the Americans with their huge population seemed to have relaxed public concern over the necessity of supplying reserves. In addition the call-up in Canada was suspended in September due to the influenza epidemic. This gap in recruiting was partially filled by the transfer of part of the Royal North West Mounted Police into the C.E.F. Several units were placed on active service, leaving five hundred stationed in western Canada with functions similar to those of the Dominion Police.²⁰⁴

During September controversy over the entrance of

²⁰²Ibid., August 30, 1918, p. 1.

²⁰³Canadian (formerly News-Telegram), September 27, 1918, p. 4.

²⁰⁴C.A.R., 1918, p. 456.

Mennonites into Canada was given considerable attention. The Calgary Herald declared that "Western Canada wants no more draft evaders," and enquired as to why the Mennonites should be considered a "special case."²⁰⁵ Since they had failed to register for the draft and were not yet naturalized Canadian citizens as they had not been in Canada for five years, "they were still subject to American law and should be held accountable under the Canadian American draft treaty,"²⁰⁶ argued the Herald.

The Dominion Government cannot afford to make it possible for Mennonites from across the border to evade their duty as American citizens by merely crossing the international boundary line. To do so would not only bring the government into contempt, but would give just cause for complaint on the part of the American authorities.²⁰⁷

The primary concern of the press with respect to Mennonite immigration was the fact that these people were not to be subjected to compulsory military service. The Bulletin found the statement of the Superintendent of Immigration at Ottawa to the Mennonites "remarkable." "It establishes that these people are coming to Canada because the government invited them to come,"²⁰⁸ stated the Bulletin, and to get them to come the government assured them that they would not be liable for service under the Military Service Act.

It was not for the purpose of making Canada an asylum for slackers and a paradise of refuge for semi-citizens that Canadians enlisted to fight for the overthrow of autocracy. And it will be a poor reward for

²⁰⁵Herald, September 5, 1918, p. 1; September 27, 1918, p. 6.

²⁰⁶Ibid., September 27, 1918, p. 6. ²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Bulletin (Edmonton), September 30, 1918, p. 7.

their self sacrifice if, in their absence, people of this class are allowed to come in, further dilute the national sentiment of the Dominion, lay hold upon its resources, and thus narrow the opportunities the returned soldiers will have to live and prosper in the country for which they are fighting.²⁰⁹

The Bulletin, normally a defender of minority groups, found it difficult to understand how the government could disfranchise alien groups on one hand and then on the other hand admit Mennonites and exempt them from military service.²¹⁰ The Bulletin continued to defend the loyalty of the French Canadians and found the charges of the Reverend K. H. Palmer, that French Canadians were hampering the war effort, disconcerting.

After having aroused all the passions of racial and sectarian bigotry against the Roman Catholic church for purposes of the election it is rather disconcerting to have one of the most active agents of that campaign now cavorting around the country advertising the fact that the Jesuits and the Pope have enough pull to keep their students for the priesthood out of the army in defiance of the law when the sons of widowed mothers and crippled fathers are told that patriotism demands service and sacrifice on their part. Whatever Rev. Mr. Palmer's intentions or desires may be, at any rate he is giving the measure of the sincerity of the Borden government in its anti-Catholic campaign of last December.²¹¹

On October 12 the Bulletin declared Union government a failure since "figures prove that both in the raising of reinforcements and in the production of supplies"²¹² the Union government had done less than the Conservative government which preceded it. "Autocratic government in Canada has been a failure both as the agency for

²⁰⁹Ibid. ²¹⁰Ibid., October 2, 1918, p. 7.

²¹¹Ibid., September 28, 1918, p. 7.

²¹²Ibid., October 12, 1918, p. 7.

administering public affairs," declared the Bulletin. "It is now under fire of protests from those newspapers which helped to establish it."²¹³ The Bulletin also refused to believe the verdict of Mr. Justice McLennon of his inquiry into the military vote case in the constituency of St-John-Iberville in Quebec. The Bulletin criticized the judge and his verdict and then proceeded to state "How Union Government Wins Elections."²¹⁴

At the elections of 1917 military officers, no doubt under Government direction, decided who should be elected and who defeated. The soldier must do as he is told at peril of liberty and life. A civilian majority could be swamped at will in any constituency, and was so swamped in as many constituencies as the election managers for the Government thought necessary or desirable.²¹⁵

During October the press showed some concern over the government's order which forbade strikes or lockouts in Canada until the end of the war.²¹⁶ Those who disobeyed this order and were of military age were to be drafted whether employer or employee. In Calgary the Labour Union passed resolutions demanding that the government rescind the order forbidding strikes and proceeded to defy the government order.²¹⁷ While some Alberta papers speculated that the Calgary strikers would be called out, it was rumoured that the government would widen the scope of the no strike order.²¹⁸ "No one in Canada questions the right of workers to settle their differences

²¹³Ibid. ²¹⁴Ibid., October 15, 1918, p. 7.

²¹⁵Ibid. ²¹⁶Ibid., October 12, 1918, p. 1.

²¹⁷Ibid., October 14, 1918, p. 1.

²¹⁸Ibid., October 22, 1918, p. 5.

with their employer by strike methods when all other means fail," declared the Calgary Herald.²¹⁹ "Nobody outside the Union Government the Herald evidently means,"²²⁰ announced the Bulletin. "The ministers have passed an Order in Council making it a punishable offence for workers to cease work for their employers."²²¹ The Albertan, which had earlier criticized the government for overlooking the Calgary strike, now accused the government of not understanding the labour situation.²²² The cancellation of the charges against the C.P.R. strikers in Calgary elicited an emotional editorial from the Edmonton Bulletin.

This means that the order is not to be enforced. That is, the Government of Canada issued an order that when openly defied it did not attempt to enforce. The order was in effect a mandatory conscription of labour just as the order of April 20th was a mandatory conscription of soldiers. Both are an assumption of autocratic authority. Both were revolutionary in their character. Neither had the mandate of the people behind them. Both broke solemn pledges made by the Government to the people chiefly concerned. The mandatory military conscription order was enforced against the people generally and especially against the farmers of the west who could not resist except by direct appeal to force for which they were not inclined. But the labor conscription order was not enforced because organized labor could make passive resistance effective by a general strike.²²³

With respect to the conscription of farmers, advertisements in the press by the Military Service Branch intimated that

²¹⁹ Calgary Herald quoted in Bulletin (Edmonton), October 22, 1918, p. 7.

²²⁰ Bulletin (Edmonton), October 22, 1918, p. 7.

²²¹ Ibid. ²²² Albertan (Calgary), October 11, 1918, p. 3.

²²³ Bulletin, October 26, 1918, p. 9.

farmers holding exemptions could have them renewed if they could provide proof that they were contributing satisfactorily to the country's food production.²²⁴ The Bulletin welcomed the announcement but warned that it was no more definite "than the exemption certificates held by farmers last spring which were cancelled and whose holders were taken from the fields."²²⁵ The other papers seemed to have lost interest in the conscription issue and devoted their attention to the flu epidemic and the anticipated end to the war. The Albertan objected to charges by the Bulletin that the government was criminally negligent in not having established a national quarantine against the flu epidemic.²²⁶

The Bulletin objected to most actions of the Union government and editorially denounced the late publication of an Order in Council which required men of military age to carry a certificate issued by a justice of the peace as to the year of his birth or as to the date of his marriage. The Order in Council which was passed on the nineteenth of September was retroactive to September 1 although it was not published in the Canada Gazette until October 5. The Bulletin objected to the change in regulations as a certificate signed by two reputable citizens had been acceptable prior to September 1, 1918. "Thousands of men," declared the Bulletin, "are carrying these certificates in blissful ignorance of the fact that they are of no value."²²⁷

²²⁴ C. A. R., 1918, p. 466.

²²⁵ Bulletin (Edmonton), October 23, 1918, p. 7.

²²⁶ Ibid., October 25, 1918, p. 7.

²²⁷ Ibid., October 28, 1918, p. 8.

The Bulletin maintained that any individual could be placed in an army camp and treated as a military deserter. In addition, a fine of fifty dollars, a month's imprisonment or both could be levied if an individual failed to produce the appropriate documents.²²⁸ The Bulletin also seemed to be questioning the censorship legislation.

Will it render the Bulletin liable to suppression and the editor to five thousand dollars fine and five years imprisonment to ask if the men responsible for the passing of such an order on the 19th of September, making it effective from September 1st and solemnly publishing it in the official gazette are drunk or crazy?²²⁹

The announcement of the unconditional surrender of Turkey and rumours that revolution had broken out in Austria occupied the front pages of the Alberta press on November 1. The surrender of Germany seemed imminent and most Alberta papers insisted that the eastward advance of the western front precluded other news on November 4 and reports of an impending peace were received with enthusiasm during the next few days. The acceptance of the armistice terms by Germany and the end of hostilities on November 11, 1918 was welcomed by the press.

With the end of the war, the question of the enforcement of the Military Service Act became rather academic and the debate settled around what action was to be taken against defaulters and employers who had employed people without proper papers. Employers who had disregarded the laws with respect to hiring could be subject to a maximum six months imprisonment and a five hundred dollar fine.²³⁰ On November 17 the government announced that defaulters

²²⁸ Ibid. ²²⁹ Ibid. ²³⁰ Ibid., November 11, 1918, p. 9.

would be punished although no definite decision as to what action should be taken was reached. It was suggested, however, that the punishment should include disfranchisement for a definite period of time.²³¹ This suggestion did not impress the Edmonton Bulletin which suggested that "the man who was willing to be ruled by the Huns rather than fight is not likely to be enough concerned about the question of who does rule him to feel penalized if his vote is cancelled."²³²

The Bulletin stated that the concern shown by Ottawa over the matter was "political and not punitive."²³³ To suppose that the "Government would lose an opportunity to use any possible excuse as a reason for carrying through further measures of disfranchisement would not be reasonable,"²³⁴ declared the Bulletin. The removal of the vote "will not punish the defaulted, but it may better the Government's chances of retaining power at the elections."²³⁵ The Edmonton Journal denied the charges and pointed out "the fact that these people will vote against the government is not enough reason to give them the vote."²³⁶

The Bulletin sympathized with the growing criticism of the Union government and supported the call of the Canadian Council of Agriculture for the "repeal of the War-time Elections Act, the suspension of government by Order in Council, the restoration of representative rights and duties of Parliament, the removal of censorship and

²³¹ Ibid., November 18, 1918, p. 1.

²³² Ibid. ²³³ Ibid. ²³⁴ Ibid. ²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Journal, November 22, 1918, p. 4.

permission of free speech."²³⁷ The Bulletin also criticised the government's moves with respect to reconstruction.

Whether the Union Government fell down because it could not enforce conscription or because it could but did not want to, its failure to provide reinforcements in the number declared necessary forbids hope that it will supply a reconstruction measure of the kind that is now necessary.²³⁸

At the end of 1918 it appeared that defaulters would still be prosecuted. On December 7, Meighen declared that it was the policy of the government to convict offenders and that there would be no amnesty under the law.²³⁹ Of the eight thousand Alberta men called up under the Military Service Act, five hundred had failed to report for duty and another five hundred and thirty-five had failed to register under the Act.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Bulletin (Edmonton), December 3, 1918, p. 7.

²³⁸ Ibid. ²³⁹ Ibid., December 9, 1918, p. 12.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., December 16, 1918, p. 3.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The war had a dramatic affect on the Alberta press. Although there were a few pacifistic declarations during the war, newspapers in the province took a loyal attitude, openly and enthusiastically supporting the war effort. They encouraged enlistment, asked for contributions to patriotic funds and published the names of subscribers to Victory Loans. Agreement about the necessity and correctness of the allied cause was so self-evident that it was usually only discussed when it was necessary to point out to dissident elements in Quebec their patriotic duty.

The press agreed that the war should be conducted efficiently and that Canada should make her contributions quickly and do her share. How to arrive at these objectives led to disagreements between Alberta papers. The greatest criticism of the Borden government came from papers which were traditional opponents of the Borden government but even pro-government papers offered suggestions. This is not to imply that the opposition was solidified. The Liberals certainly were not a unified party and the events arising out of the conscription issue attest to this point. This may be best illustrated by examining the Alberta weekly press.

Although many weekly newspapers offered little editorial comment on national or international affairs, most of them carried war news. Editorially they often avoided controversial issues. Conscription was one of these. Of the ninety-two weekly papers

examined, sixty-two offered no editorial comment on conscription in 1917.¹ Of those who commented, twenty-nine supported compulsory military service while one disagreed. This is not to suggest that all papers agreed with the Military Service Act, only that they were in favour of conscription in principle. Many of these papers followed the lead of the Alberta dailies, some of which demanded conscription of wealth and conscription of labour for war production in addition to conscription for military service. The number of editorials in the weekly press might lead one to underestimate the concern over the issue. This impression may be corrected by examining the position of the press with respect to the federal election of 1917.

Two elections were held in Alberta in 1917--the provincial election in June and the federal election in December. In the provincial election forty-one of the weeklies supported the Liberals, eighteen gave their support to the Conservatives, four to other candidates and twenty-eight contained no political comment or adopted a neutral position.²

The number of papers which contained little or no political comment is not surprising as twelve seats in the provincial legislature were not contested and several of the papers which did not comment were located in these ridings. Furthermore, the weeklies, even those whose partisanship was clearly evident, usually took a very soft line politically although there were vehement supporters of

¹ The position taken by individual newspapers is outlined in Appendix III which also contains a summary of the attitude of the Alberta press to conscription and Union government.

² The Alberta Non-Partisan was not publishing at this time.

all political groups in the election. What is surprising is the shift which occurs by December. One must be careful in comparing the voting results from these two elections for several reasons. Constituencies differ in size and location. The provincial Liberal parties on the prairies had tended to alienate themselves from the federal Liberals in order to maintain the support of the low tariff farm vote. The new electoral laws altered the size and nature of the electorate in the federal election of December 7, 1917. However, since we are not comparing voting patterns but the changes in the political stances of various papers, our analysis is not affected by these changes. Prior to the federal election of 1917 Alberta papers were usually consistently partisan or consistently non-political in their views, hence our observations on their behaviour are useful.

In December of 1917 sixty-three of the Alberta weeklies supported the Unionist cause. Of the eighteen papers which had supported the Conservatives in the provincial election in June, sixteen supported the Unionist cause. One turned Liberal and one remained undecided. Of the forty-one weeklies supporting the Liberals in June, only six papers remained Liberal; twenty-seven turned to the Unionist cause and eight adopted a non-political format. Not all Alberta weeklies preferred to avoid the issues however. In June, twenty-eight weekly newspapers offered no political comment but in December only eight of these continued to adopt a non-political line. Since the major issue in the Federal election of 1917 was conscription, there can be little doubt that it was this issue which was responsible for the political shift in the Alberta weekly press.

Part of the Alberta daily press had also undergone a

transition in political allegiance after the formation of a pro-conscription party. Indeed, it was the Calgary Albertan, a former Liberal daily, which led the crusade for a coalition win-the-war government. Four Alberta dailies did not change their political image to any great degree. The Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal followed Sir Robert Borden and the Conservative party into the Unionist fold while the Edmonton Bulletin and the Calgary Canadian, formerly the News-Telegram, remained Liberal. Three Alberta dailies which had previously supported the Liberal party rallied to the Unionist cause--the Lethbridge Herald, the Calgary Albertan, and the Medicine Hat News.

While the Calgary Canadian was the only Alberta daily which strongly opposed the principle of conscription, it was the other Liberal daily, the Edmonton Bulletin which led the campaign for Laurier and the Liberals in Alberta. In this they were of course unsuccessful. The degree to which the success of the Unionist cause was the result of the changing attitudes in the Alberta press may be questioned. It is not the purpose of this thesis to determine the degree to which newspapers affect the voting patterns of a frontier population, rather it is to examine what position was taken by Alberta papers with respect to the issues being discussed. The ability of the Alberta electorate to ignore the political views of the daily press in the electoral campaigns following the war should indicate to us the amount of caution required in using this information as a reflection of public opinion.

Indeed, it is in the changes which occur in provincial and federal politics following the war--in the destruction of the

dominance of the traditional parties in Alberta and the Canadian west--that these issues deserve consideration. Among the reasons for these changes--the high tariffs, the discrepancies in railway rates, the disagreement over the federal government's agricultural policy, and the emergence of populist ideas--one must consider the promises to western farmers made and broken during the conscription crisis. The enforcement of the Military Service Act was the platform upon which Union government was presented to the Canadian people. Yet it was the formation of this alliance which helped to destroy the traditional parties. It is within this context that an understanding of the Alberta press and their attitudes during the conscription crisis in World War I is useful. Hopefully, it helps to explain not only the transition from the traditional political parties but the distrust by the electorate of the press itself.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SOLDIERS AND THE ELECTIONS; RESULTS OF THE CONTEST

| Province | Liberals | Union | Conserv- atives | Govt. Civilian Vote | Opp. Civilian Vote | Govt. Soldiers' Vote | Opp. Soldiers' Vote |
|----------------------|----------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Prince Edward Island | 2 | 0 | 2 | 10,450 | 12,224 | 2,775 | 434 |
| Nova Scotia | 4 | 3 | 9 | 40,985 | 49,831 | 10,699 | 1,474 |
| New Brunswick | 4 | 4 | 3 | 35,871 | 32,397 | 9,934 | 919 |
| Quebec | 62 | 1 | 2 | 61,808 | 240,504 | 14,206 | 2,927 |
| Ontario | 8 | 12 | 62 | 419,928 | 263,300 | 95,212 | 5,793 |
| Manitoba | 1 | 6 | 8 | 83,469 | 26,073 | 23,698 | 1,157 |
| Saskatchewan | 0 | 7 | 9 | 68,424 | 30,829 | 12,996 | 2,672 |
| Alberta | 1 | 4 | 7 | 60,399 | 48,865 | 19,575 | 1,055 |
| British Columbia | 0 | 1 | 12 | 59,944 | 40,050 | 26,461 | 2,059 |
| Yukon | 0 | 0 | 1 | 666 | 776 | 293 | 32 |
| Total | 82 | 38 | 115 | 841,944 | 744,849 | 215,849 | 18,522 |

APPENDIX II

SOLDIERS AND THE ELECTIONS; RESULTS OF THE CONTEST

| Constituency | Opposition Candidate | Government Candidate | Member Elected | Politics | Majority |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| ALBERTA | | | | | |
| Battle River | D. W. Warner | W. J. Blair | W. J. Blair | Govt. | 1,538 |
| Bow River | J. E. Gouge | H. H. Halladay | H. H. Halladay | " | 761 |
| Calgary East | Wm. Irvine | D. E. Redman | D. E. Redman | " | 4,452 |
| Calgary West | J. A. Irving | T. M. M. Tweedie | T. M. M. Tweedie | " | 6,971 |
| Edmonton East | A. E. May | H. A. Mackie | H. A. Mackie | " | 2,653 |
| Edmonton West | Hon. F. Oliver | W. A. Griesbach | Gen. W. A. Griesbach | " | 2,696 |
| Lethbridge | L. L. Pack | W. A. Buchanan | W. A. Buchanan | " | 2,834 |
| Macleod | D. R. McIvor | H. M. Shaw | H. M. Shaw | " | 2,518 |
| Medicine Hat | C. B. Reilly | Hon. A. L. Sifton | Hon. A. L. Sifton | " | 3,301 |
| Red Deer | W. F. Puffer | Michael Clark | Michael Clark | " | 2,413 |
| Strathcona | A. T. Mode | J. McC. Douglas | J. McC. Douglas | " | 2,599 |
| Victoria | W. H. White | J. B. Holden | W. H. White | Opp. | 251 |
| Yukon | F. P. Congdon | Dr. A. Thompson | Dr. A. Thompson | Govt. | - |

APPENDIX III

THE ALBERTA PRESS: POLITICAL VIEWS AND CONSCRIPTION

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| C | Conservative | A | Against Conscription |
| F. C. | Farm Candidate | F | For Conscription |
| L | Liberal | N. C. | No Comment |
| Lab | Labour | | |
| N | Nonpolitical or Neutral | | |
| N. P. | Non-Partisan | | |
| U | Undetermined or Undecided | | |
| UN | Unionist | | |
| X | Not publishing | | |

The above abbreviations are used in the following table to indicate the political leanings of Alberta newspapers and to indicate the editorial position of each paper on the conscription issue.

| Newspapers Published Daily | Provincial Election 1917 | Federal Election 1917 | Editorial Stand on Conscription |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Calgary Albertan</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Calgary Herald</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Calgary News-Telegram</u> (<u>Canadian</u>) | N | L | A |
| <u>Edmonton Bulletin</u> | L | L | F |
| <u>Edmonton Journal</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Lethbridge Herald</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Medicine Hat News</u> | L | UN | F |

| Newspapers Published Weekly | Provincial Election 1917 | Federal Election 1917 | Editorial Stand on Conscription |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Acme Sentinel</u> | N | UN | F |
| <u>Alberta Non-Partisan</u> | X | N. P. | U |
| <u>Alix Free Press</u> | N | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Alliance Times</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Athabaska Herold</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Banff Crag and Canyon</u> | N | UN | F |
| <u>Bashaw Star</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Bassano Mail</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Bawlf Sun</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Bellevue Times</u> | N | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Big Valley News</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Blairmore Enterprise</u> | N | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Bow Island Review</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Brooks Bulletin</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Calgary Eye Opener</u> | N | UN | F |
| <u>The Camrose Canadian</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Cardston Globe</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Carmangay Sun</u> | L | X | F |
| <u>Carstairs Journal</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Castor Advance</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Chauvin Chronicle</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Chinook Advance</u> | U | U | F |
| <u>Claresholm Review-Advertiser</u> | L | UN | F |

| Newspapers Published Weekly | Provincial Election 1917 | Federal Election 1917 | Editorial Stand on Conscription |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Clive News-Recorder</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Cochrane Advocate</u> | U | U | N. C. |
| <u>Coleman Bulletin</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Consort Enterprise</u> | U | U | N. C. |
| <u>Coronation Review</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Crossfield Chronicle</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Daysland Press</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Delburne Progress</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Didsbury Pioneer</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Edmonton Weekly Town Topics</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Empress Express</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Erskine Review</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Forestburg Advance</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| Fort Saskatchewan <u>Conservator</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Galahad Mail</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Gleichen Call</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Grande Prairie Herald</u> | C | L | N. C. |
| <u>Granum News</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Hanna Herald</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>The Hardisty Mail</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>The High River Times</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Holden Herald</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Hughenden News</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| Innisfail <u>Province</u> | U | U | N. C. |

| Newspapers Published Weekly | Provincial Election 1917 | Federal Election 1917 | Editorial Stand on Conscription |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Irma Times</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Killam News</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Lacombe Western Globe</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Lake Saskatoon Journal</u> | F. C. | X | N. C. |
| <u>Leduc Representative</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Lloydminster Times</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Lomond Press</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Lougheed Express</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Mannville Empire</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Monitor News</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Munson Mail</u> | U | U | N. C. |
| <u>Nanton News</u> | U | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Nutcracker</u> | Lab | Lab | X |
| <u>Okotoks Review</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Olds Gazette</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Oyen News</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Peace River Record</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Peace River Standard</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Pincher Creek Echo</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Ponoka Herald</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Provost News</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Raymond Leader</u> | C | U | N. C. |
| <u>Redcliffe Review</u> | C | UN | N. C. |

| Newspapers Published Weekly | Provincial Election 1917 | Federal Election 1917 | Editorial Stand on Conscription |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Red Deer Advocate</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Red Deer News</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Sedgwick Sentinel</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Statesman</u> | Lab | Lab | A |
| <u>Stavelly Advertiser</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Stettler Independent</u> | U | U | N. C. |
| <u>Strathmore and Bow Valley Standard</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Strome Dispatch</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Taber Times</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Three Hills Capital</u> | C | UN | F |
| <u>Tofield Advertiser</u> | L | N. C. | N. C. |
| <u>Trochu Tribune</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Vegreville Observer</u> | L | UN | F |
| <u>Vermilion Standard</u> | C | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Viking News</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Vulcan Advocate</u> | N. P. | N. P. | N. C. |
| <u>Wainwright Star</u> | U | UN | F |
| <u>Western Leader</u> | L | U | N. C. |
| <u>Western Standard</u> | L | UN | N. C. |
| <u>Wetaskiwin Free Press</u> | U | U | N. C. |
| <u>Wetaskiwin Times</u> | L | L | N. C. |
| <u>Youngstown Plain Dealer</u> | U | U | N. C. |

Summary of Views of the Weekly Press

| <u>June Provincial Election</u> | | <u>December Federal Election</u> | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Conservative | 18 | Labour | 2 |
| Farm Candidate | 1 | Liberal | 7 |
| Labour | 2 | Non Partisan | 2 |
| Liberal | 41 | Unionist | 63 |
| Non Partisan | 1 | No political comment | 15 |
| No political comment | 28 | Not publishing | <u>3</u> |
| Not publishing | <u>1</u> | Total | <u>92</u> |
| Total | <u>92</u> | | |

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Undecided or no political comment in both elections | 8 ^a |
| Liberal in both elections | 6 |
| Liberal to Unionist | 27 |
| Conservative to Unionist | 16 |
| Non-political to Unionist | 20 |
| Liberal to undecided | 8 |
| Conservative to Liberal | 1 |
| Conservative to undecided | 1 |
| Non Partisan | 2 ^b |
| Labour | 2 |
| Farm Candidate | <u>1^c</u> |
| Total | <u>92</u> |

^aIncludes two papers which had ceased publication after June 7.

^bOne of these was not published prior to the June election.

^cThis paper ceased publication between elections.

Conscription

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 29 | For |
| 1 | Against |
| 62 | No editorial comment or undecided |

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Irma Times, 1917.

Killam News, 1917.

Lake Saskatoon Journal, 1917.

Lloydminster Times, 1917.

Lomond Press, 1917.

Lougheed Express, 1917.

Mannville Empire, 1917.

Monitor News, 1917.

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